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First published in 1919
Reprinted 1920, 1921, 1923
New and Cheaper Edition 1929
One Volume Edition with a New Chapter, 1940
Reprinted 1948
Reprinted in Two Volumes in 1953

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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
UNWIN BROTHERS LIMITED
WOKING AND LONDON

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PART III

CHARTISM

I

THE GROWTH OF CHARTISM

I.—THE CENTRES AND LEADERS OF THE MOVEMENT

In 1836 the revival of the working class activities was clearly discernible, and it was everywhere connected with parliamentary politics. There were at that time four centres of the movement, which supplied thought and enthusiasm to all that was alive among the industrial population—London for the South of England, Birmingham for the Midlands, Newcastle and Leeds for the North of England, Glasgow for Scotland. With the exception of London, where intelligent artisans stood at the head of the revival, all the other centres were, at first, managed by middle class extremists, idealists, and revolutionists. Since about 1839 Manchester became the focus of Chartist thought and action in the North, while Bradford gave to the movement some of its most zealous and orthodox adherents, always hunting for heretics and "traitors."

London was the centre of the Moral Force section, though representatives of Physical Force were not lacking. The latter, who only came to the fore in moments of great excitement, had their seats in Spitalfields and in the district round Lincoln's Inn Fields. On the whole, the Moral Force men had the upper hand, because they had the most intelligent members, able writers and speakers. The most distinguished among them were William Lovett, Henry Hetherington, James Watson, and Henry Vincent.

In the Midlands, Thomas Attwood dominated the scene up to 1840. Surrounded by his lieutenants, Scholefield, Muntz, Salt, and Douglas, he worked with might and main for his paper currency schemes until the movement had outgrown his control and his aims.

In the North, Feargus O'Connor, Taylor, Stephens, and Lowery were the protagonists of the Physical Force party—the largest and most determined section of the Chartist movement. Their influence was also distinctly felt in Wales.

The movement in Scotland exhibited mental characteristics similar to those of London. The Moral Force men prevailed over the adherents of O'Connor. The Scottish movement has not produced any great leader who would bear comparison with Lovett or O'Connor or Attwood, but it possessed a relatively great number of able writers and serious propagandists.

There was no Chartist organisation in Ireland, her working men were too poor and little educated to be able to grasp the meaning and support the movement of a Labour Party. Besides, all the Irish Radical writers and orators who could have organised Chartist associations lived in England and worked either for Repeal or Revolution. Ireland supplied to the Chartist movement its greatest orator, O'Connor, and its most trenchant writer, Bronterre O'Brien.

The adherents of Chartism belonged, as a rule, to the better paid and mentally active sections of the working class. This was particularly the case in the years from 1836 to 1842. Contemporary evidence leaves no doubt that it was not a movement of the lowest strata of society, but of the best elements of the industrial population.[1]

2.—THE LONDON LEADERS

The author of the Charter and the most sympathetic leader of Chartism was William Lovett (1800–1877), a Cornish workman, who came to London in 1821. Originally a ropemaker, he turned to cabinetmaking and became an efficient artisan. He read and learned much, attended the Mechanics' Institution and debating societies, joined the Metropolitan Political Union in 1826, and was gradually converted to Owenism. He was one of the first founders of co-operative shops, and spread the doc-

[1] Thomas Carlyle, *Chartism*, 1839, c. 4; *Westminster Review*, April, 1839, p. 496 *sqq.*; J. S. Mill, *Dissertations and Discussions*, vol. 2, p. 188-9.

trines of Owenite Socialism among the working men, but always in conjunction with Radical politics. His activity as secretary of the Society for the Diffusion of Co-operative Knowledge and as a political worker brought him into close relation with Owen, Hunt, Cobbett, and the Socialist leaders, and made him one of the best known and most respected of the leaders of the London workmen. "Possessed of a clear and masterly intellect, and great powers of application, everything that he attempted was certain of accomplishment." [1] This opinion was fully shared by all who knew him. His numerous manifestoes and other writings as well as his continual struggle for the working classes, lasting for nearly thirty years, testify to the intellectual and moral strength of this man. His autobiography, entitled *Life and Struggles*, is still worth reading. A profoundly ethical strain runs through all his writings. There is not the least trace of demagogy in his character. The essence of his convictions, acquired under the fire of the social battlefield, he summed up in the following advice to the working classes: "You must become your own social and political regenerators, or you will never enjoy freedom; for true liberty cannot be conferred by Acts of Parliament or decrees of princes, but must spring from the knowledge, morality, and public virtue of our population." [2]

In his capacity as a leader of revolutionary movements Lovett did not escape attacks from both friend and foe. In July, 1839, he was sentenced to a year's imprisonment for seditious libel and treated like a common criminal. His sufferings affected him incomparably less than the attacks made upon him by O'Connor and his adherents for keeping his agitation within legal and peaceful limits, for his warm advocacy of education for the masses, and for the plan he devised during his imprisonment for completing a system of popular education. Lovett, who survived Chartism by two decades, was an Owenite and democrat from about 1826 to 1842. He afterwards gradually abandoned Owenism and class warfare and came to consider democratic and

[1] Gammage, *History of the Chartist Movement*, ed. 1894, p. 10. Compare Graham Wallas, *Life of Francis Place*, pp. 362–5.

[2] Lovett and Collins, *Chartism*, 1840.

educational reform as the best means of improvement of the condition of the working classes.

Henry Hetherington (1792–1849), a compositor, was one of the first pupils at the Mechanics' Institution, and he followed the current of the intelligent working men of the metropolis by becoming an Owenite, free-thinker, and democrat. In 1828 he published a pamphlet in defence of free-thought. In October 1, 1830, he undertook the publication of *Penny Papers for the People*, which subsequently became the *Poor Man's Guardian*. In this action he followed the example of William Carpenter (afterwards editor of *Lloyd's Newspaper*), who published his *Political Letters* without a newspaper stamp, and initiated the struggle against the taxes on knowledge. In this campaign Hetherington showed himself to be an extraordinarily able, pertinacious, and dauntless leader of men. In 1831 three indictments were framed against him, and he was sentenced to six months' imprisonment. After having served his sentence he continued his campaign without interruption, and found a valiant supporter in Bronterre O'Brien as editor of the *Poor Man's Guardian*. In 1832 he published the *Republican*, an extremely mordant weekly paper, quite in the style of the speakers at the Rotunda; King William IV. is always called Mr. Guelph in its columns and the Queen Mrs. Guelph. Towards the end of 1832 he spent another six months in prison, whence, by means of letters and articles, he stirred up public opinion against the newspaper stamp. In 1833 he undertook the publication of the *Destructive*, or *People's Conservative*, which was edited in exactly the same tone as the *Poor Man's Guardian*, and later on *Hetherington's Twopenny Despatch* and *London Despatch*. The latter gave expression to the agitation for the fundamental ideas of the Charter and for a peaceful policy restricted to moral weapons. All these papers were issued unstamped and forced the Government to reduce the stamp duty from 4d. to 1d. Hetherington did yeoman service to the movement as a missionary of the London Working Men's Association in 1837.[1]

[1] Gammage, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

Hetherington's views of Chartism were similar to Lovett's. He was a Puritan in morals, Spartan in simplicity, a total abstainer and humanitarian to the point of self-denial. By his death Chartism lost one of its most unselfish, valiant, and resolute adherents. He left a will, in which, after a deistic confession of faith, he declares :—

" These are my views in quitting an existence that has been chequered with the plagues and pleasures of a competitive, scrambling, selfish system ; a system by which the moral and social aspirations of the noblest human being are nullified by incessant toil and physical deprivations ; by which, indeed, all men are trained to be either slaves, hypocrites or, criminals. Hence my ardent attachment to the principles of that great and good man—Robert Owen. I quit this world with a firm conviction that his system is the only true road to human emancipation ; that it is, indeed, the only just system for regulating the affairs of honest, intelligent human beings—the only one yet made known to the world that is based on truth, justice, and equality. While the land, machines, tools, implements of production and the produce of man's toil are exclusively in possession of the do-nothings, and labour is the sole possession of the wealth-producers—a marketable commodity, bought up and directed by wealthy idlers—never-ending misery must be their inevitable lot. Robert Owen's system, if rightly understood and faithfully carried out, rectifies all these anomalies. It makes man the proprietor of his own labour and of the elements of production—it places him in a condition to enjoy the entire fruits of his labour and surrounds him with circumstances that will make him intelligent, rational, and happy.

" Grateful to Mr. Owen for the happiness I have experienced in contemplating the superiority of his system, I could not die happy without recommending my fellow countrymen to study its principles and earnestly strive to establish them in practice. I freely forgive all who have injured me in my struggle ; and die in the hope and consolation that a time is approaching when the spirit of antagonism will give place to fraternal affec-

tion and universal co-operation to promote the happiness of mankind."

"London, August 21, 1849." [1]

In the last year of his life he was acquainted with Frederick Denison Maurice.

James Watson (1799–1874) resembled Hetherington both in character and disposition. He was born in Yorkshire, of working class parents. His mother taught him to read and write. In 1819 he became a free-thinker by reading Cobbett's and Carlile's newspapers. In 1823 he was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for circulating seditious and free-thought literature. In 1826 he became an Owenite, and two years later he was the storekeeper of the first co-operative association in London, where he made friends with Lovett. Watson was the first itinerant preacher or missionary of co-operation, and greatly contributed to the rise of the co-operative movement of that period. In 1831 he started a publishing office and bookshop for works on free-thought and Owenism. He joined the National Union, pushed the sale of the *Poor Man's Guardian*, and in 1832 opposed, in public discussion, Owen's anti-parliamentarism and the orthodox Owenites. In 1833 he was again sentenced to six months' imprisonment, and once more in 1834. He belonged to the Charter Committee, and worked for Chartism on the same lines as Lovett and Hetherington.[2]

The fourth in the band of workers was Henry Vincent (1813–1879), a compositor, who joined the Chartist movement at its inception. He was the most popular speaker among the London working men and one of the most prominent orators of Chartism. In February, 1839, he founded a weekly, *The Western Vindicator*, and transferred his activities as an agitator to Wales. The longer his absence from London, the more rapidly he forgot the peaceful, moral tactics recommended by Lovett and Hetherington, and he followed O'Connor's and Stephens's example in dropping into violent phraseology, and into predictions of the

[1] G. J. Holyoake, *Life of Hetherington*, 1849.

[2] W. J. Linton, *James Watson*, 1879; Holyoake, *History of Co-operation*, 1875, vol. 1.

imminence of their victory. On May 7, 1839, he was arrested for taking part in riotous assemblies, and on July 31 he was sentenced at Monmouth to a year's imprisonment. On March 26, 1840, he stood again before a jury for taking part in riotous assemblies, and received an additional sentence of eight months, so that he spent altogether twenty months in prison. From 1842 onwards he was active as a temperance lecturer and Radical politician.

3.—THE NORTHERN LEADERS

It was from Ireland—economically the most retrograde and nationally the most disturbed corner of the United Kingdom—that the socialist and revolutionary movement of the masses of the most industrial country of the world received its orator and leader. Yet he was alien to it, both by race and language: "I am a foreigner by language and blood," he told the operatives of Yorkshire;[1] the causes of his rebellion bore no relation at all to theirs; his dreams by night and thoughts by day were an independent Ireland,[2] whilst their aspirations moved towards a social revolution. O'Connor's dominant position in the Chartist movement is one of the most difficult problems in the history of British labour. A glance at the history of Ireland of the years from about 1750 to 1840 as well as at the life history of O'Connor may help us to solve this problem. In the latter half of the eighteenth century, when cattle-breeding in Ireland became more profitable than agriculture, the ground landlords fenced in numerous small farms to form large grazing farms, and even where commons still existed they were enclosed to form part of the pastures. In this way many Irish small-holders lost their means of subsistence altogether; they formed secret leagues such as the Whiteboys, who tore down the fences and stopped at no violence. The secret organisation of the Whiteboys still existed in the first three decades of the nineteenth century, and Feargus O'Connor belonged to it. The impression which this secret organisation made upon O'Connor was indelibly engraved

[1] *Northern Star*, October 16, 1838. [2] *Ibid.*

upon his mind; the Whiteboys were his type of revolutionary activity.[1]

In the same period a change of opinion swept over a section of the Irish Protestants, which exercised a profoundly revolutionary influence on Irish thought. Owing to bad government and financial mismanagement the English colonists of Ireland became disaffected. Protestants and Catholics found that they had interests in common against England. In this rebellious mood they came under the influence of the ideas of the Radical movement in England, the American War of Independence, and finally the French Revolution. The educated Protestants of Ireland absorbed the revolutionary ideas and furnished the Irish with thinkers and leaders for an insurrection against England. The Catholic Irish also contributed some of the leaders, of whom Arthur O'Connor, an uncle of Feargus, was one of the most influential. In October, 1791, they formed the organisation of the United Irishmen, read Rousseau, Paine, Locke, came into touch with the London Corresponding Society, and five years later conspired with the French Government for the purpose of freeing the Irish people, with their help, from the yoke of the English. The insurrection failed. A few of the leaders were condemned to death, whilst Arthur O'Connor escaped and entered the French army, in which he ultimately became a general. Arthur was also a political writer and an admirer of Condorcet, whose name he adopted; in 1798 he published an essay on the "State of Ireland," in which he pointed out that the granting of Universal Suffrage was absolutely necessary in order to make it possible for the people to alter the rights of property according to the wishes of the majority. Arthur O'Connor was idealised by his nephew Feargus. During the first year's issue of the *Northern Star* (1837–8) Arthur O'Connor's biography appeared in several serial parts, and in June, 1843, Feargus brought out a new edition of Arthur's aforesaid essay, and commended it to the Chartists as the quintessence of all political and economic wisdom. Arthur and Feargus O'Connor vividly recall to mind

[1] *Northern Star*, March 28, 1840; May 29, 1841; May 13, 1848. *Cp.* Thomas Frost, *Forty Years' Recollections*, 1880, p. 137 *sqq.*

the generals and democrats of the gentry of Poland, who took part in all popular movements from the last partition of Poland down to 1871, and who were very greatly influenced by ideas of a social revolution.

These national, family, and social revolutionary traditions gave Feargus O'Connor a historical outlook that was closely allied to that of British Socialism and Chartism, viz., agrarian reform on socialistic lines, the sovereignty of the people, the law of nature, hatred of oligarchy, the absolute necessity for Universal Suffrage. This mental affinity with the revolutionary movement of the British working classes he combined with great oratorical powers, which could not fail to impress the inarticulate masses of the factory towns. What they attempted to express by passionate outbursts of temper, impulsive strikes, and clumsy conspiracies, the Irish agitator gave utterance in thunderous rhetoric, sometimes trenchant, but always vulgar. His mental culture was surprisingly limited, his legal education was neither comprehensive nor profound enough to separate him from the masses. There was no need for him to descend from any scientific heights to the madding crowd, nor was it necessary for them to make any effort to understand him. Charles Kingsley's O'Flynn in *Alton Locke* is not a bad representation of O'Connor, while Charles Dickens's labour leader, Slackbridge, in *Hard Times*, is rather too much of a caricature of the same personality.

After a short political career in the first Reform Parliament (1833–4), in which he mostly spoke on Irish affairs and generally voted with the Radicals, except on their motions for the modification or abolition of the Corn Laws, he began to attend working class meetings and to advocate the cause of democratic reform. But he never succeeded in gaining the confidence of the metropolitan artisans. To the thinking workmen of London he was a blustering demagogue, a backwoodsman with plenty of ready-made phrases at his command. When they came into open conflict with him and told him their opinion of him, O'Connor replied, "You must fight it out; you shall either crush me or I will annihilate your association." The highly skilled artisans

of the large towns only aroused O'Connor's derision ; he did not regard them as working men at all, and declared, " Let those with unshorn chins, blistered hands and fustian jackets read the occupations of some of the subscribers to the document, and the bubble bursts ! "[1]

Whenever O'Connor came into conflict with the intellectuals of the working classes, he inevitably made the appeal to the fustian jackets, unshorn chins, and blistered hands. The *Northern Star* is full of these appeals of O'Connor. An appeal of this nature was always an indication of its author being about to oust one of his rivals. In the course of time this conflict occasionally softened, the Londoners could not fail to recognise O'Connor's tireless activity, whilst O'Connor, in his turn, learned much, especially in the years 1842–44, and attained a certain degree of comprehension of modern industrial problems. For instance, he declared that :

" The ten hour proposals will later on be regarded as a measure of the power of the working men. It is an attempt to initiate a series of laws which will curb the new order of things that has been produced by machinery, and which will place it at the service of the whole of society, instead of letting it act solely to the advantage of a single class."[2]

Still, the rupture between O'Connor and the London artisans was never healed. O'Connor was not able to find a footing in London. He, therefore, removed his sphere of activity to Yorkshire, where the operatives in the autumn of 1837 were making preparations to issue a newspaper of their own, and had contributed £800 for this purpose. O'Connor became the editor, and on November 18, 1837, the first number of the *Northern Star* saw the light. The existence of the paper was assured from the very first. O'Connor was the editor-in-chief ; the sub-editor was William Hill, a Swedenborgian preacher and a grammarian, from whom O'Connor acquired the power of writing a correct and trenchant style of English. Towards the end of 1842, Hill fell out with his chief, and George Julian Harney entered the

[1] *Northern Star*, February 10 and 24, 1838 ; March 3, 1835.
[2] *Ibid.*, April 6, 1844 ; June 29, 1844.

editorial office. In November, 1844, the paper was moved from Leeds to London, where it existed till 1852. The largest circulation of the *Northern Star* reached a total of 45,000 copies, but each number was read by at least ten people.

The founding of the Great Northern Union was another of O'Connor's ventures. In Leeds there already existed a Working Men's Association on the lines of the London Association. O'Connor exerted himself to make this association the central union of all the Radical working men's societies of the North of England. He chose the term "Union" in imitation of the Birmingham society, but the words "Great Northern" showed that he contemplated from the very beginning the inclusion of the whole of the North, although the Corresponding Acts did not allow any such federation. On April 26, 1838, a general meeting of the Leeds Working Men's Association took place, which appointed a committee to draw up a programme for the Great Northern Union. O'Connor was elected secretary of the committee, who outlined a programme in which stress was laid upon the importance of democratic parliamentary reform and trades unionism. The following was one of the objects of the Great Northern Union :—

"The last but not the least object which your Committee confidently anticipate the Northern Union will constantly keep in view is the uniting together, upon the general principle of justice all those who, though loving peace, are resolved to risk their lives in the attainment of their rights. Your Committee deem it, therefore, expedient that before joining the Union every member should distinctly understand that in the event of moral force failing to procure those privileges which the Constitution guarantees but which a party would abrogate, and should the Constitution be invaded, it is resolved that physical force shall be resorted to, if necessary, in order to secure the equality of the law and the blessings of those institutions which are the birthright of free men. That as the object of yielding allegiance is to receive protection, the fact of withholding protection is a violation of the bond which should bind subject to monarch ; and, therefore, the Union should recognise no authority save that

which emanates from the legitimate source of all honour, namely, from the people."[1]

The outlined programme was adopted at a great meeting in Leeds on May 3, 1838, at which numerous delegates were present from Huddersfield, Halifax, Elland, Dewsbury and other smaller places. The meeting pledged itself to acknowledge Feargus O'Connor as their leader—or, as Francis Place remarks, as the apostle of the North.

A new policy was introduced into the movement by his recommending the use of physical force against the Government as well as by the summons to the working men to prepare for such eventualities. There can be no doubt that O'Connor meant no more than he said, viz., opposition to the constituted authorities as a last resort, but his insurrectionary manner of speech, his references to the " heroic " deeds of the Whiteboys, and his glorification of Arthur O'Connor caused disastrous misunderstandings.

The work which O'Connor began was carried on by other agitators—Joseph R. Stephens, Richard Oastler, John Taylor, George Julian Harney; the lawyer, August Harding Beaumont, the tailor, Robert Lowery, and the publican, Peter Bussey. The great mass of the factory hands of the North of England adopted the policy of physical force.

John Taylor (1804–1841) came of a prosperous Scotch family, studied medicine, and became a surgeon in the navy. He received a legacy of £30,000, which he spent almost entirely on fitting out a ship to assist the Greeks in their war of liberation against the Turks. He also lived a few years in Paris after the July Revolution, and came into contact with the revolutionary leaders and conspirators. He was a born fighter, and had little or no inclination for protracted political talk and speechifying. When the Radical movement had made itself felt in Great Britain he returned to Scotland, settled in Glasgow, and founded the *Glasgow Liberator*, which had only a short existence. His sphere of action was not in a close and confined study. He threw himself body and soul into the agitation and was drawn under O'Connor's

[1] *Northern Star*, May 5, 1838.

influence. Of the London working men he had the same opinion as his chief; it was only in 1840, after having witnessed William Lovett's determination and capacity for self-sacrifice, that he altered his opinion. Here is the conclusion of a speech which he made at Newcastle at the end of December, 1838: "I shall part with my sabre only with my life, and my own hand shall write the epitaph upon a tyrant's brow in characters of blood and with a pen of steel."[1] In 1838 and 1839 he stood at the head of the secret league of the extreme Chartists.

August Harding Beaumont (1800-1838) was an English lawyer, whose family were inclined to Radicalism. Even as a young man he entered into relations with the Irish Radicalism and founded a Radical newspaper in London, which had only a brief existence. He then moved to Newcastle, where he assisted in founding the *Northern Liberator* and edited it. The first number appeared on October 21, 1837. The *Northern Liberator* pronounced for democratic parliamentary reform, for the repeal of the Poor Law of 1834, and in general for the interests of the working men. Beaumont was out and out in favour of the policy of physical force. In a public meeting in Newcastle on January 1, 1838, he demanded the execution of Lord John Russell, Lord Melbourne, and Sir Robert Peel.

In energy of expression, in a strict logical sequence of ideas, and mastery of homely sentiment, J. R. Stephens, a Nonconformist minister, was head and shoulders above both Vincent and O'Connor. In the extreme impetuosity with which he called for opposition by force of arms he surpassed Beaumont and Taylor, without descending to their exhibitions of bad taste. During 1837 and 1838 he gave utterance, with a display of volcanic energy, to the whole gamut of feelings of right and wrong, justice and injustice, love for the poor and hatred of the rich. His sources were the Bible and the doctrines of the law of nature. He was the avenging preacher of the God of wrath, a prophet from the old books of Israel, inflammatory and inciting to violence. He was in his element when speaking in public. Standing on the platform in the open air, on some town moor or common, sur-

[1] *Northern Star*, December 29, 1838.

rounded by thousands of colliers, weavers, stockingers, and metal workers, cheering and applauding, a feverish and frenzied enthusiasm took hold of him and all the powers of his mind became enhanced, concentrated, and transformed into winged words, which sped forth tempestuously, and yet with rhythm and order. His was a short-lived but heroic adventure. The first rude contact with the mailed fist brought him back to the sober realities of life. The spirit of the prophet of Yahve departed, and Stephens turned into a conservative and mild-mannered preacher.

When the new Poor Law was put into force he, following Oastler's example, actively opposed it; and when Chartism, in 1837, began to grow in power he took up its cause. He declared himself a convinced partisan of Universal Suffrage, and in September, 1837, he helped to finance the *Northern Star*; he took twenty £1 shares.[1] He cannot, however, be regarded as a strict adherent of the Chartist movement. His main object was the repeal of the new Poor Law and the improvement of the material condition of the working people. The Charter seemed to him to be a fit means to this end, but he always subordinated politics to social reform.

Towards the end of the year 1838, his agitating reached boiling point. The nocturnal gatherings must have presented a solemn and fantastic scene, held as they were in the open air, attended by thousands of working men, many of them with flaming torches in their hands, others armed with muskets, all of them eagerly listening to Stephen's violent oratory. The propertied classes became alarmed, and on December 12, 1838, the torchlight meetings were declared illegal by royal proclamation.[2]

Richard Oastler (1789–1861)—the "factory king"—considered the new Poor Law to be subversive of the Constitution, and instigated the masses to oppose by force of arms the administration of the Poor Law He exhorted them in the following terms:

[1] G. J. Holyoake, *Life of J. R. Stephens*, 1881, p. 181, where the receipt for £20 is reproduced.

[2] For a description of the torchlight meetings, see Disraeli, *Sybil*, book 4, chapter 4.

"Arm then, arm, my fellow-countrymen, against this most execrable law of tyrants! Arm ye, sons of Britain, whose souls are in the Ark of the Constitution! Arm, and make the traitors pause and tremble. . . . Let no other ornaments be cared for in your houses but bright and well-made arms. Arm then, arm for peace and justice. If the tyrants know that you possess arms, there will be no need for you to use them. . . Be sober, be vigilant, be *men!*"[1]

Oastler never definitely declared himself in favour of the Charter. Radical democracy was repugnant to his Tory conscience. He entertained a particular hatred for Liberal philosophy—the anti-dogmatic character of liberal thought. He stood, however, in close relation to O'Connor and Bronterre O'Brien. When the latter undertook the London correspondence for the *Northern Star*, Oastler wrote to Stephens: "Tell O'Brien to put the *Poor Man's Guardian's* soul into the *Star*."[2] He meant the hatred which O'Brien felt for the middle classes.

Oastler and Stephens were on friendly terms with Robert Owen. On May 17, 1837, they spoke at a meeting in Huddersfield in favour of a resolution, in which the government was called upon to provide State-aid for founding agricultural co-operative societies for the unemployed; the land was to be tilled in common and to remain the common property of the workers.[3] Owen had a high opinion of Stephens, and said: "Although Stephens is a clergyman, he is a most ardent friend of the working classes and a very liberal man."[4]

4.—THE CHARTIST SCHOOLMASTER

Among all the Chartist leaders there was not a single one who so thoroughly embodied the movement as James Bronterre O'Brien (1805–1864). His admirers and followers were to be found everywhere. His best known disciples were Harney and Gammage. The Chartists regarded him as their schoolmaster. O'Brien held the same position to the thinkers in the Chartist movement as O'Connor to the masses.

[1] *Northern Star*, August 25, 1838. [2] G. J. Holyoake, *op. cit.*, p. 86.
[3] *New Moral World*, May 27, 1837. [4] *Ibid.*, April 29, 1837.

O'Brien was under the deepest obligation to Owen, Ogilvie, and Gray. At a somewhat later date he received great inspiration from Hodgskin's *Labour Defended*. He added nothing to the ideas of these four men. They formed his arsenal whence he procured his weapons in his contests for political and social reforms. The influence of Spence, Godwin, and J. F. Bray is also clearly visible. He was a most extensive reader, but always with a view to his journalism. His trenchant articles, which he often signed "Bronterre," procured for him the nicknames Brimstone O'Brien or Bronze O'Brien.[1] Land reform, currency reform, and the conflict between capital and labour are the fundamental ideas of his journalistic labours.

His school days he spent in his native country and studied law at Trinity College, Dublin. In 1830 he came to London to complete his studies. Here he rapidly plunged into the Radical movement, joined Cobbett and Hunt and gave up his legal career.

In January and February, 1831, O'Brien published three essays in Carpenter's *Political Letters*, on the condition of England—written in a Radical and Owenite sense. Owen's communist plans were to be realised by means of a parliament elected by universal suffrage, whilst the State was to acquire the necessary land and machinery in order to turn the operatives into independent producers.

These articles attracted Hetherington's attention, who was at that time looking out for a capable editor. Hetherington appointed him to the post.[2] The exact date when O'Brien became the editor of Hetherington's weekly is not known. To all appearance he lived at that time in Birmingham, where he was editor of the *Midland Representative*. In addition, a letter from O'Brien, dated from Birmingham, March 27, 1832, occurs in Owen's manuscripts, and in it the writer describes himself as Owen's admirer and adherent. O'Brien advised Owen to make his institution in Gray's Inn Road the centre of a popular movement where his ideas could reach the masses; Owen was to take Attwood for a pattern and to form a compre-

[1] *Northern Star*, April 11, 1840. [2] *Ibid.*, March 29, 1845.

hensive organisation, for the masses had already begun to turn away from the Reform Bill agitation, and were sick and weary of public meetings. But Owen would be well advised to keep his own views on religion, responsibility, and other such matters in the background, at least for a short time, since the people were still frightfully superstitious.[1]

In reading the *Midland Representative* and the *Poor Man's Guardian* it is possible to follow O'Brien's mental evolution. In 1831 he was still an Owenite and Radical, defending co-operation against capitalists as well as against trade unionists. He thought trade unionism to be a folly and waste of money, leading but to discord and riot. He distinctly refused to accept Hodgskin's views of the class-struggle as propounded in *Labour Defended*.[2] Having settled in London and learned the ideas of the National Union of the Working Classes, he became one of the champions of the class struggle theory also. He quotes Hodgskin, especially his *Natural and Artificial Right of Property*, which corresponded most of all to O'Brien's own way of thinking. Hodgskin himself wrote to O'Brien and congratulated him on his efforts. Also Godwin, Spence, and several French social critics are referred to by O'Brien. Even Richard Oastler had recourse to the *Poor Man's Guardian* to ventilate his ideas.[3]

From 1833 onwards O'Brien took a deeper interest in the French literature of social reform. Three years later there appeared from his pen an English translation of Buonarroti's *Conspiration pour l'égalité*, in which he found his own ideas embodied. Two years later he published the first volume of a work on the life of Robespierre; no further volumes appeared. In the meantime he was active in journalism, had much intercourse with Irishmen—with O'Connor from 1836—and in 1837 he published *Bronterre's National Reformer* for a few months. In 1838 he contributed to the *Northern Star*; at the end of 1838 he became the editor of the *Operative*, a weekly, belong-

[1] Frank Podmore, *Robert Owen*, 1906, II., 430–431.

[2] *Midland Representative*, May 28, 1831, p. 8 (Review of Knights' Working Man's Companion).

[3] *Poor Man's Guardian*, February and March, 1833.

ing to a group of working men who disagreed with Lovett and Hetherington. When this paper ceased publication he joined forces with William Carpenter towards the end of 1839, and they jointly published the *Southern Star* during the first months of 1840. From April, 1840, to the middle of 1841 he was in prison. In the latter half of 1842 he edited the *British Statesman*; in 1845, 1846, and 1847 he published the *National Reformer and Manx Weekly Review*, at Douglas, in the Isle of Man, which enjoyed complete freedom of the press, and in its columns he waged violent warfare against O'Connor. In the 'fifties he wrote for *Reynolds' Newspaper*; the articles he contributed to it were published posthumously under the title *Rise and Progress of Human Slavery* (1885). During all these decades he was actively engaged in lecturing to the remnants of Chartism.

In contradistinction to O'Connor, who, in 1845, abandoned agrarian socialism, O'Brien remained a socialist to the very last, and he only differed from the orthodox Owenites in making the journey to the final goal by several stages—viz., Spenceanism, the Charter, and the reform of credit and currency according to Gray and Bray. He thought that "with the Charter, national ownership of land, currency, and credit, people would soon discover what wonders of production, distribution, and exchange might be achieved by associated labour, in comparison with the exertions of isolated individual labour. Thence would gradually arise the true social state, or the realities of socialism, in contradistinction to the present dreams of it. And doubtless the ultimate consequences would be the universal prevalence of a state of society not essentially different from that contrived by Owen. But the idea of jumping at once from our present iniquitous and corrupt state of society into Owen's social paradise, without any previous recognition of human rights and without establishing a single law or institution to rescue the people from their present brutalised condition of ignorance and vassalage, is a chimera."[1]

He died on December 3, 1864, two months after the founding of the International Working Men's Association in London.

[1] *National Reformer and Manx Weekly Review*, January 30, 1847.

George Julian Harney (1817–1897), like his master, participated in the Chartist movement from beginning to end as one of its leaders. He was educated at the Royal Naval School at Greenwich from his eleventh to his fourteenth year. His career as a sailor soon came to an end. In 1833 he began to read the *Poor Man's Guardian*, joined Hetherington in his fight against the newspaper tax, was arrested several times for acting as agent of unstamped newspapers, and in 1836 was sentenced to six months' imprisonment. He adored O'Brien as "his guide, philosopher, and friend,"[1] from whom he derived his liking for the revolutionary literature of France. Marat was his revolutionary ideal; he had a predilection for calling himself a "friend of the people," and signed his articles "Ami du peuple." His attitude from 1838 to 1840 was insurrectionary and revolutionary. He knew Benbow's pamphlet by heart. He became more moderate in his views after 1840, when he had recognised the dire results of this policy. Towards the end of 1842 or the beginning of 1843 he joined the staff of the *Northern Star*. In the same year Friedrich Engels came from Bradford to Leeds, in order to enter into relations with the Chartist movement. At that time he was collecting materials for his book, *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England* (Condition of the Working Class in England).[2]

At the end of November, 1847, Harney also made the acquaintance of Karl Marx, who at that time had come over to London from Brussels in order to attend the conference which led to the drawing up of the "Communist Manifesto." Harney formed the connecting link between the British Chartists and European revolutionaries and leaders of the proletariate. Nevertheless he stood much nearer to O'Brien and Louis Blanc than to the Marxian policy. Harney was a facile journalist and a good speaker, but he was not an original thinker.

R. G. Gammage, the author of the *History of the Chartist Movement*, came from Northampton, and was successively a cartwright, shoemaker, and finally a medical practitioner. From

[1] *Northern Star*, May 19; 1838, p. 6.
[2] *Social Democrat*, London, January, 1897.

the very beginning of his Chartist career he was one of O'Brien's admirers, and regarded his writings as the last word in wisdom. He stuck to his master through thick and thin, especially in his quarrel with O'Connor. Gammage was an opponent of the ultimate aim of the communists. His programme consisted of an independent labour policy for setting up a democratic government and for carrying out social forms as expounded by O'Brien. In other words: the Rights of Man and the Rights of Labour.

II

THE POLITICAL ORGANISATION OF THE MASSES

I.—THE LONDON WORKING MEN'S ASSOCIATION (L.W.M.A.)

In the later months of 1835 and the early part of 1836, independent attempts were made to organise Labour politically, on the one hand by Feargus O'Connor and on the other hand by the friends of Francis Place. These attempts were abortive, for the workmen were unwilling to accept any leaders who did not belong to the working class. Place deplored "the complete estrangement of the working men from the middle classes,"[1] whilst O'Connor accused the leaders of the London artisans of dreading his rivalry and of alienating the men from him in order to sell them to the Radicals. Place's friends relaxed their endeavours, and O'Connor transferred his activities to the North of England and Scotland. Now that the pretenders had vacated the political arena belonging to the London operatives, Lovett and his friends met on June 6, 1836, at No. 14, Tavistock Street, Covent Garden, for the purpose of forming an association for London working men as the nucleus of an independent Labour party.[2] Lovett drew up a prospectus and the rules of the association, and a public meeting was convened ten days later, in which the association was founded and the rules adopted.[3] The association grew rapidly and was imitated in the provinces. The members were required to belong to the industrious classes, to "be of good moral character," to strive for education and enlightenment and to declare for the democratic reform of parliament. The cards of membership bore the following motto:

[1] Place, MSS., 27819, pp. 24, 229, and *sqq.*

[2] *Northern Star*, September 19, 1846 (O'Connor's sketch of the history of Chartism).

[3] William Lovett, *Life and Struggles*, 1876, p. 91 *sqq.*

" Whoever does not perform his share of work, diminishes the store of public wealth and lays his duty upon the shoulders of his neighbour."

The committee did not let the grass grow under their feet, but immediately took steps to bring the new organisation to the notice of the working men. The executive published an address to the working men of the United Kingdom and the nation, in which it subjected the Reformed Parliament to a critical examination :

" There is at present a contest between the two great parties both in and out of parliament—between the agricultural and privileged classes on the one hand and the moneyed and commercial classes on the other. We have little to expect from either of them. There are persons among the moneyed classes who, to deceive their fellow-men, have put on a cloak of reform ; many boast of freedom while they help to enslave us, preach justice while they help to oppress us. Many are for step-by-step improvement, lest we should see our political degradation too soon, and make an advance towards depriving them of their privileges. These persons, under various pretences, enlist some portion of our deluded countrymen—and, by opposing them to each other, accomplish their object of deceiving and fleecing the whole. So long as we are duped this way and we continue to seek political salvation through the instrumentality of others, so long will corrupt legislation prevail, so long must we continue to be the cringing vassals of a proud, arrogant, speech-making few. The men who are in parliament have interests opposed to yours. . . . Yet such is the description of persons composing that House, and whom we in our simplicity expect will sacrifice their interests by beginning the great work of political and social reformation. Working men ! Enquire into this matter, and if you feel with us, stand apart from all projects and refuse to be the tool of any party that will not, as a first and essential measure, give to the workmen equal political and social rights so that you may be able to elect men of your own who will take care that the interests of the working classes, ' who are the foundation of the social edifice,' shall not be sacrificed. . . .

There are in the United Kingdom 6,023,752 males over 21 years of age, only 840,000 have a vote, and owing to the unequal state of representation about one-fifth of that number have the power of returning a majority of members." [1]

The Working Men's Association held public meetings, and always took care that working men had control of the meetings. The officers of the association were also ordinary working men, so as to convince the public of the parliamentary capacity of the working classes. Until that time it had always been the custom to call in some well-known politician or parliamentary "lion" to take the chair at any large public demonstration. The L.W.M.A. broke through this rule, and this breach of custom created a greater sensation than the most brilliant speech of any Labour leader. Public opinion regarded it as a declaration of independence on the part of the working classes. The working men of Manchester followed London's example, and associations of working men were founded in several towns in the north and south of England and in the Midlands.

At the commencement of 1837, Lovett, Hetherington, Watson, Hartwell, Vincent, and their friends had made such progress that they planned a great meeting at which the Charter was to be publicly formulated. The meeting took place at the Crown and Anchor, Strand, London, on February 28, 1837, and was attended by 3,000 working men, the *élite* of the London working class. Prominent Radical politicians were also present. Feargus O'Connor travelled on purpose from Exeter to London to attend this meeting. He was not among those whom the London organisers delighted to honour, but he did not wish to be ignored; Lovett's popularity was distasteful to him.

In the memorable meeting of February 28, 1837—the birthday of the Charter—Hartwell took the chair. After thanking the meeting for the honour shown in electing him chairman he continued as follows:—

"I express gratification that you placed a working man in the chair, rather than running after a man with a high-sounding

[1] *Rotten Parliament*, 1836; Place, MSS., 27819, p. 195 and *sqq.*; *Bronterre's National Reformer*, February 4, 1837.

title or of great ability but little honesty. This great mass meeting will remove the stigma from the working classes that they do not attend meetings to support their principles, but to gaze on a 'lion' or to applaud and swallow the dogmas he may give utterance to. It also shows the great progress of democratic education among the workmen. The greatest danger for the workman is to remain attached to so-called political leadership of the men of culture and wealth. We need democracy, political and social rights for the producing millions. It seems to me to be an anomaly that in a country where the arts and sciences have been raised to such a height, chiefly by the industry, skill and labours of the artisan, where the principle that labour is the source of all wealth is generally acknowledged, that in such a country only one adult male in seven should have a vote, that in such a country the working classes should be excluded from the pale of political life. How can we emancipate ourselves from this state of political bondage? Not by pandering to the fears of that timid and irresolute class of politicians who have lately appeared among the Radical ranks, not by relying on the dastardly Whigs, not by placing faith in the tyrannical Tories, but by a full reliance on our own strength—upon the inherent justice of our claims."

Lovett was the second speaker:—

"The exclusive power of wealth and privilege has in all ages been the greatest obstacle to human improvement. When their baleful influence failed to bind down effectually the swelling power of thought, when art and industry burst their slavish bands, when the despotism of the few could no longer prevail, they became kind patrons and leaders and promoters of all improvements. By their careful training and watchful attention they soon made knowledge subservient to their purposes, by embracing within their circle the master-spirits of intellect. By fictitious honours and glory they rallied to their aid the brave, the resolute, the ambitious; by hopes of preferment, rank, riches and pleasure, they formed a powerful phalanx around them, and by the frowning terror of the law scared back all the rest of mankind. Therefore, working men, you must trust to yourselves."

He then proposed the following resolution :—

"This meeting is of opinion that so long as political power is vested exclusively in the few, will they seek to perpetuate their power and to render the multitude subservient to their purposes; they will continue to make them machines and instruments of production, toiling from youth to old age to procure a scanty portion of food and clothing, and having neither time to cultivate their mental powers nor means of enjoying rational comforts."

Lovett was followed by Henry Vincent, who after a republican harangue, moved the second resolution :—

"We believe that the only security against the corruption of the few and degradation of the many is to give to the great body of the people their equal political and social rights by the exercise of which they will improve their condition, gradually acquire knowledge and by experience learn wisdom. To obtain these rights it is necessary that every male above 21 years of age have the power to choose his representative without loss or injury, which can only be effected by secret voting. To have all classes represented equal representation is necessary. To purify the system from all remnants of corruption annual parliaments are necessary."

Other working men spoke, among them the saddler, Richard Cameron, who condemned the new Poor Law. The object of this reform was not only to prevent the population of the working classes from increasing, but to starve and exterminate those who were incapable of finding a new market for their labour. Finally Feargus O'Connor spoke, but only a few words, as the meeting had given him a cool reception.

The meeting resolved to adopt the petition to parliament which had been published by the committee on February 25, containing the following reforms: universal suffrage, annual parliaments, secret ballot, equal electoral districts, abolition of the property qualification for parliamentary candidates, payment of members.[1]

The next step was to present the petition to parliament and

[1] *True Sun*, March 1, 1837.

to introduce it in the form of a Bill. The members of the Working Men's Association called a meeting for the purpose and a resolution proposed by Hartwell was adopted, which appointed a committee to get into communication with those Radical members of the House of Commons, who by their activity in parliament had shown themselves friendly disposed to the people, and to invite them to co-operate with the committee of the London Working Men's Association to draft a Bill embodying the six points.[1] The committee carried out this request, and on May 31 and June 7, consultations took place between the Radical members of parliament and a delegation from the L.W.M.A., at which Francis Place was also present. The former comprised Daniel O'Connell, John A. Roebuck, Colonel Perronet Thompson, and Sharman Crawford, who pledged themselves to take part in drawing up the People's Charter and to represent it in parliament.

Since the Corresponding Act rendered it impossible to communicate the result of these conferences to the working men's associations in the provinces, Lovett published an address, which was printed in the Radical press, and in which he informed them of the result. The address then continued :—

"In the course of a few weeks these Bills will be prepared and printed for circulation under the title of "The People's Charter," and will form a rallying point for Radical reformers, a standard by which to test all those who call themselves the friends of the people. . . . Working men's associations should be established in every town and village throughout the country, and the wise and good of every class should be enrolled among them. We caution you not to branch your associations, because the Corresponding Act is still in power, not to correspond privately, but through the press."[2]

The movement extended everywhere so rapidly that the committees of the working men's associations in the provinces applied to the London Working Men's Association to send down agitators (missionaries) to the North of England in order to organise the masses of working men who had taken up the movement. Hether-

[1] *British Statesman*, June 5, 1842. [2] *True Sun*, June 29, 1837.

ington, Vincent and Cleave undertook this mission. They were received everywhere with enthusiasm, and Lancashire, Yorkshire, Durham, and Northumberland were organised.

The London Working Men's Association was also deeply persuaded of the necessity for the international solidarity of the working men and of all oppressed peoples. It took up the cause of the oppressed British colonies and agitated for the self-government of Canada. When the Polish refugees turned for sympathy to the London Working Men's Association, the latter immediately seized the opportunity of stigmatising Palmerston's anti-Polish policy and at the same time of calling upon the workers of all countries to organise themselves internationally and to acquire political knowledge.[1]

2.—THE PEOPLE'S CHARTER

Fourteen months elapsed from the meeting on February 28, 1837, until the publication of the Charter. The six members of parliament who had pledged themselves in the meetings of May 31 and June 7, 1837, to co-operate in the composition of a bill embodying the six points were obliged to return to their constituencies, owing to the dissolution of parliament and the new elections of the summer of 1837. It was only in November that they returned to London. Lovett and his friends had their time too fully occupied with their struggle for existence, with their manifestoes and their trade unionist work, to be able to complete in so short a time the drafting of a large and complicated Bill—no easy task for men without legal training. Out of the twelve members of the committee who had been appointed for the task Lovett was the only man who undertook the work and gave all his spare time to it.[2] According to all canons of historical criticism, Lovett must be regarded as the author of the Charter. Francis Place also laid claim to its authorship,[3] but his share in the preparation of the Charter was quite insignificant; it was restricted to a transposition of the headings.

[1] Lovett, *Life*, p. 150. [2] *British Statesman*, June 12, 1842.
[3] Place, MSS. 27820, pp. 89–99.

Even during Place's lifetime it was the generally accepted opinion that the Charter was mainly the work of Lovett. No one raised any protest against this assumption, not even Place himself, although he read the newspapers in which this statement was made.[1]

On May 8, 1838, the People's Charter was published. It contained the following main points :—

" The People's Charter : A Bill to provide for the just representation of the People of Great Britain and Ireland in the Commons House of Parliament.

" Whereas, to insure, in as far as it is possible by human forethought and wisdom, the just government of the people, it is necessary to subject those who have the power of making the laws to a wholesome and strict responsibility to those whose duty it is to obey them when made. And whereas, this responsibility is best enforced through the instrumentality of a body which emanates directly from, and is itself immediately subject to, the whole people, and which completely represents their feelings and their interests. And whereas, the Commons House of Parliament now exercises, in the name and on the supposed behalf of the people, the power of making the laws, it ought, in order to fulfil with wisdom and with honesty the great duties imposed on it, to be made the faithful and accurate representation of the people's wishes, feelings and interests. Be it therefore enacted : "

This preamble, written by J. A. Roebuck, is followed by the six points containing the provisions in legal phraseology arranged in paragraphs, setting forth the granting of the franchise to every male person over twenty-one years of age, provided that they are of sound mind and not convicted of any crime. Naturalisation of foreigners was to be permitted after two years' residence in the United Kingdom. The country should be divided into 300 electoral districts, and every constituency was to contain as nearly as possible an equal number of inhabitants. No other qualifications for candidates was to be required than election by the electors. Parliaments were to be restricted to *annual*

[1] *British Statesman*, June 12, 1842 ; *National Association Gazette*, June 4, 1842.

periods. The ballot was to be secret. Every member of parliament was to receive £500 for his work in the public service.

Henry Hetherington bore the cost of printing the Charter. Lovett wrote the following manifesto to announce the publication of the Charter:—

"The Working Men's Association of London to the Radical Reformers of Great Britain and Ireland!

"Fellow-countrymen! We hold it to be an axiom in politics that self-government, by representation, is the only just foundation of political power—the only true basis of Constitutional Rights—the only legitimate parent of good laws; and we hold it as an indubitable truth that all government which is based on any other foundation has a perpetual tendency to degenerate into anarchy or despotism; or to beget class and wealth idolatry on the one hand, or poverty and misery on the other. While, however, we contend for the principle of self-government, we admit that laws will only be just in proportion as the people are enlightened; on this, socially and politically, the happiness of all must depend; but as self-interest, unaccompanied by virtue, ever seeks its own exclusive benefit, so will the exclusive and privileged classes of society ever seek to perpetuate their power and to proscribe the enlightenment of the people. Hence we are induced to believe that the enlightenment of all will emanate from the exercise of political power by all the people. A strong conviction of these truths, coupled as that conviction is with the belief that most of our political and social evils can be traced to corrupt and exclusive legislation, and that the remedy will be found in extending to the people at large the exercise of those rights now monopolised by a few, has induced us to make some exertions towards embodying our principles in the Charter. . . . Fellow-countrymen, the object we contemplate in the drawing up of this Bill is to cause the Radicals of the kingdom to form, if possible, a concentration of their principles in a practical form, upon which they could be brought to unite, and to which they might point, as a Charter they are determined to obtain. . . . We hope that electors and non-electors will continue to make it the pledge of their candidates; will seek to extend its circu-

lation, talk over its principles, and resolve that, as public opinion forced the Whig Reform Bill, so in like manner shall this Bill eventually become the law of England.

"London, May 8, 1838."

The impression which the Charter made upon the working men's associations throughout the country was extremely favourable.[1] The publication of the Charter came at a time when the country was already seething with political agitation. Even at the end of 1837 it was becoming increasingly clear that a political storm was brewing among the people. About the middle of November, 1837, the newly-elected House of Commons assembled. On November 20 the young Queen read the Speech from the Throne—a colourless and non-committal document that gave rise to bitter disappointment in the circles of the hopeful reformers. In the debate on the address that immediately followed the Queen's Speech the Radical member for Finsbury, Thomas Wakley, an old friend of the National Union, moved an amendment in which he regretted that the Queen's Speech made no reference to an extension of the franchise and other parliamentary reforms which were desired by the people. Some of his Radical colleagues supported him. Lord John Russell replied in the name of the government that the agitation for further parliamentary reform could not be supported by the government. The authors of the Reform Bill of 1832 went to the furthest bounds of possibility; they regarded that Bill as final; they had made no concealment of their views, and it was, therefore, impossible for them to alter the limits which had been set once and for all or to act contrary to the intentions of the legislators.[2]

Lord John Russell's declaration that the government regarded the Reform Act of 1832 as the final word in parliamentary reform earned for him the nickname of "Finality Jack." It caused absolute dismay in the circles of reformers, and roused the Radical and working men's associations to a feverish pitch of

[1] R. G. Gammage, *History of the Chartist Movement*, 1894, pp. 8–9.

[2] Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates*, 3 series, vol. 39, pp. 11–12, 69–70; *Annual Register*, 1837, p. 392.

activity. Of course, the progressive leaders of the working men were prepared for a declaration of this sort, and when it was actually made they only regarded it as a justification of their attitude and an incitement to greater activity. In Leeds the *Northern Star* appeared from November 18 under the direction of Feargus O'Connor and became the central organ of the Chartists. In Newcastle the *Northern Liberator* had made its appearance fully a month previously. In December, 1837, the Birmingham Political Union declared for Universal Suffrage and took measures for mobilising the masses in the Midlands and the North of England.

3.—THE BIRMINGHAM POLITICAL UNION

The years 1836 and 1837 witnessed a financial crisis of a rather severe, though sporadic, character. Over-speculation in railway and foreign stock, as well as the reaction of the crisis in the United States of America, resulted in a panic, especially affecting those towns and districts which depended on the export trade to America, India, and China. Credit became short; the Bank of England raised the bank rate in order to check the depletion of gold; in the autumn of 1836 numerous joint stock companies became bankrupt, and the Bank of England declined to discount the bills of the provincial banks of issue. The towns which suffered most were Birmingham and Sheffield with their metal industries, and Liverpool and Glasgow with their shipping.

Attwood and his adherents, who regarded Peel's Bill of 1819 as the cause of the whole evil, and found a panacea in a paper currency, sent three deputations in 1837 to the government to call their attention to these causes and the remedies.[1] Attwood and his friend Scholefield sat in parliament as members for Birmingham, and did all they could to induce the government to give a hearing to their theories and proposals, but all their efforts were in vain. At the same time they saw that the working men were entering once more into the arena of politics and were demanding reforms. In the place of the old Political Union, which had died out at the end of 1834, but which had done so

[1] *Birmingham Journal*, June 19, 1841.

much to insure the success of the Reform Bill of 1832, the working men of Birmingham founded a Reform Union. Distress was rife in that town; many operatives lost their employment owing to the financial crisis and the consequent stoppage of business; and many of them could only be employed for shorter hours and lower wages. The operatives as well as the smaller masters suffered and therefore began to turn their attention to political reforms.

On January 15, 1837, a dinner was given in honour of Attwood and Scholefield in order to induce them to enter once more into the movement for reform. Both of them declared in their after-dinner speeches that nothing was to be expected from the parliament which had assembled as the outcome of the Reform of 1832. They drew up the following programme of reform: household suffrage, secret ballot, triennial parliaments, abolition of the property qualification for parliamentary candidates, payment of members of parliament. On May 23, the old Political Union was reorganised and this programme was handed over to it.[1] In consequence of the agitation of the working men belonging to the Union, universal suffrage was substituted for household suffrage. The Birmingham programme, as we have seen, contained *five* points only. Attwood would have nothing to do with equal electoral districts. His reasons for his attitude were highly remarkable and only came to light on May 7, 1839. On that day a deputation of Chartists, including O'Connor and Lovett, waited on Attwood to induce him to introduce the Charter into parliament. The following dialogue took place:—[2]

LOVETT: As representatives of the Chartist movement we request you, Mr. Attwood . . . to move for leave to bring in a Bill to parliament, entitled the People's Charter.

ATTWOOD: That I refuse. I agree with the five points in what was called the People's Charter, but there was one which went to alter the ancient mode of taking the suffrage in the electoral districts. The objection to it was: if the distribution of the elective franchise were carried out in full, according to the People's Charter, it would have the effect of giving to Ireland

[1] *Birmingham Journal*, June 10 and 17, 1837.
[2] Place, MSS. 27821, p. 213.

one-half of the representation. If the Irish people went on increasing and the English people diminishing, it would give to the most miserable people on earth the power of making laws for this generous and industrious nation.

LOVETT: We do not give way on the People's Charter. The people of England and Scotland are unanimous upon it. . . . and we look upon the Irish as our brethren and as one family with ourselves.

ATTWOOD: So do I, and I look on the Hindus as brethren, but I do not believe there is one man in England who would give Ireland 200 and England only 400 members of parliament.

This was Attwood's actual point of view. He regarded democracy as an evil, even if it were a necessary evil, which he had to take into consideration in order to be able to repeal Peel's Act. His interests lay solely and entirely in the sphere of currency reform.

Immediately after the Birmingham programme was drawn up the committee of the Union decided to send out emissaries to agitate in all the centres of industry and trade in the Midlands, the North of England and Scotland. The most important among the itinerant orators of Birmingham was John Collins (1800–1850), a mechanic, who had worked 14 to 16 hours a day in steel pen factories from his tenth year until 1836. Later on he became Lovett's friend and colleague, and was a fellow-prisoner with him in 1840.

4.—THE NATIONAL PETITION

The committee meetings of the Political Union were held regularly every week, and testified to the indefatigable and feverish activity at the centre of the movement. The main result of the consultations was the resolve not to rest content any longer with local petitions of sporadic unions, but to get up a comprehensive and national manifesto, including every part of the country; a national petition was to be drawn up and signed by millions of male and female operatives and reformers and presented to parliament. In March and April, 1838, the petition was drawn up by R. K. Douglas, the editor of the *Birmingham Journal*, and published on May 14.

The text of the national petition was as follows :—

TO THE HONOURABLE COMMONS OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

" Your Petitioners dwell in a land whose merchants are noted for enterprise, whose manufacturers are very skilful and whose workmen are proverbial for industry. The land itself is goodly, the soil is rich, the temperature wholesome ; it is abundantly furnished with the materials of commerce and trade ; it has numerous and convenient harbours ; in facility for internal communication it exceeds all others. For 23 years we have enjoyed a profound peace.

" Yet, with all these elements of natural prosperity, and with every disposition and capacity to take advantage of them, we find ourselves overwhelmed with public and private suffering. We are bowed down under a load of taxes, which notwithstanding falls greatly short of the wants of our rulers ; our traders are trembling on the verge of bankruptcy ; our workmen are starving, capital brings no profit and labour no remuneration, the home of the artificer is desolate and the warehouse of the pawnbroker is full, the workhouse is crowded and the manufactory is deserted.

" We have looked on every side, we have searched diligently in order to find out the causes of distress, so sore and so long continued.

" We can discover none in Nature, none in Providence. Heaven has dealt graciously with our people, but the foolishness of our rulers has made the goodness of God of no effect. The energies of a mighty kingdom have been wasted to build up the power of selfish and ignorant men, and its resources are squandered for their aggrandisement.

" The good of a party has been advanced to sacrifice the good of the nation ; the few have governed for the interest of the few ; while the interests of the many have been neglected or insolently and tyrannously trampled upon.

" It was the fond expectation of the people that a remedy for the greater part, if not the whole, of their grievances would be found in the Reform Act of 1832. They were taught to regard that Act as a wise means to a worthy end ; as the machinery of an improved legislation where the will of the masses would be at length potential. They have been bitterly and basely deceived. The fruit which looked so fair to the eye has turned to dust and ashes when gathered. The Reform Act has effected a transfer of power from one domineering party to another, and left the people as helpless as before. Our slavery has been exchanged for an apprenticeship of liberty, which has aggravated the painful feeling of our social degradation by adding to it the sickening of a deferred hope.

"We come before your honourable House to tell you in all humility that this state of things must not be permitted to continue; that it cannot long continue without very seriously endangering the stability of the Throne and the peace of the kingdom; and if by God's help and all lawful and constitutional means an end can be put to it, we are fully resolved that it shall speedily come to an end. We tell the honourable House that the capital of the master must no longer be deprived of its due profit; that the labour of the workman must no longer be deprived of its due reward; that the laws which make food dear, money scarce, labour cheap, must be abolished; that taxation must be made to fall upon property, not on industry; that the good of the many must be made the sole end, as it is the legitimate end of government.

"As a preliminary essential to these and other requisite changes, as means by which alone the interests of the people can be effectively vindicated and secured, we demand that those interests shall be confided to the people. When the State calls for defenders, or for money, no consideration of ignorance or poverty can be pleaded in refusal or delay of the call. Required as we are to obey the laws, nature and reason entitle us to demand that, in the making of the laws, the universal voice shall be implicitly listened to.

"We perform the duties of free men, we must have the rights of free men.

"We demand: Universal Suffrage . . . the Ballot . . . Annual Parliaments . . . Payment of Members . . . Abolition of Property Qualification." [1]

The object was now to make the petition a national question: to have it taken up by the masses of the United Kingdom. It was the same idea which the London Working Men's Union had held with regard to the Charter. The Birmingham men anticipated them, and the rivalry between them was soon noticeable. Attwood's prestige and that of the Political Union of 1832 gave precedence to the Birmingham Petition in the first place. But in the course of about six months the Charter had become the standard of the movement, giving it its name and objective, whilst the Birmingham Petition was only regarded as an instrument in the warfare. The victory achieved over Attwood by Lovett, a nearly unknown man, in the Midlands and in the North of England was to be ascribed, solely and absolutely, to the concrete form with which he clothed democratic principles.

[1] *Birmingham Journal*, May 19, 1838.

III

THE CHARTIST MOBILISATION

I.—THE LINE OF ACTION

THE events of the year 1837 made themselves felt with surprising swiftness. In 1838 a rapid mobilisation of the working classes was the outcome of the preparation of the Charter and National Petition and of the foundation of the Chartist press. The whole populace seethed in a state of fermentation. Attwood and O'Connor took over the management of affairs and were supported by a brilliant staff of orators, such as Stephens, Vincent, Taylor, Lowery, Douglas, and Collins. The demonstrations of the Midlands and the North of England became military reviews.

The masses of the working men marched everywhere in serried columns, accompanied by bands and standard bearers to the places of assembly. Mass meetings were held in all the industrial centres. And towards the end of the year sensational nocturnal gatherings took place, lit up by flickering torches, at which Stephens and O'Connor inflamed the masses with their speeches. The *Northern Star* declared for Owen's communist experiments and for the doctrines of Thomas Spence.[1]

The year 1838 seemed to Bronterre O'Brien to mark the actual commencement of the emancipation of the people.[2] And Francis Place expressed the greatest astonishment at the rapid ebullition of popular sentiment:—

"The great excitement, which had already become noticeable at the commencement of 1838, swept over the southern and eastern counties of England and over South Wales. Birmingham was the centre of the Midlands; Manchester and Newcastle

[1] *Northern Star*, June 16, 1838 (leading article and page 4).
[2] *Operative*, November 18, 1838.

were the hotbeds of the northern countries; Edinburgh and Glasgow the foci of Scotland. The excitement spread rapidly in all directions."[1]

Birmingham was the actual starting-point. The tour of agitation undertaken by its missionary, John Collins, in Scotland resulted in an immediate success. The meetings which he held were thickly attended, to a far greater extent than those of Daniel O'Connell or O'Connor. "In Scotland alone," Collins reported to Birmingham, "there is misery enough, intelligence enough and zeal enough to realise our aims." The trade unions everywhere took the most active part in the agitation, and worked hand in hand with the intellectual section of the working classes. The Scottish reformers then expressed the desire to arrange for holding a great demonstration in Glasgow, and to invite the leading reformers from London and Birmingham. The invitation was issued in the last week of April, 1838. It was accepted, and the Glasgow demonstration was fixed for May 21. The object of the demonstration was to cause the Scotch people to adopt and sign the National Petition.

The committee of the Birmingham Political Union now began to deal with the question as to how the moral power of the people could be organised to the best advantage in order to press the five points of the Petition upon the attention of parliament. It was well aware of the fact that parliament takes very little heed of petitions. In the meantime the government had appreciably restricted the time which had previously been reserved for the reading and discussion of petitions. Moreover, petitions up to this time were only local in their nature; they proceeded from separate towns or from small groups united by a common interest. The Birmingham Petition was to be national in character, embracing all shades of popular opinion, and to be a manifesto of the masses. Yet it was to be feared that the government would disregard a manifesto of this nature. The result of these deliberations was the outline of a plan to convoke a National Convention, a parliament of the people, which should bring the whole moral power of the people in support of the petition.

[1] Place, MSS. 27820, p. 7.

The final weapon in the armoury of the Convention was to be a proclamation of a week's national holiday, of a general strike during a week. The plans formulated by Benbow and the National Union between 1832 and 1834 appeared to have finally arrived at the point of being realised.

This was the plan of campaign which Attwood and his friends drew up during the latter part of April and the first two weeks of May, 1838, and which they disclosed at the Glasgow demonstration on May 21. This demonstration was the signal for mass-meetings to be held all over Great Britain. In all parts delegates were elected for the coming Congress. The London meeting took place on September 17, 1838, in Westminster Palace Yard, not far from the Houses of Parliament. It was not by any means so noisy as the demonstrations in the Midlands and the North of England. It was precisely for this reason that it made a powerful impression upon the nation. During the meeting in Birmingham (August 6, 1838) it was also resolved to raise a so-called "National Rent" or money contribution from those localities which sent delegates to the Convention, viz., fifty shillings for every 1000 inhabitants. In reality the demand was made to the working men's associations and to the political unions, but since the Corresponding Act did not permit any alliances between the organisations these meetings were convoked as town meetings, the towns were pledged to make the payment of the "National Rent," and the delegates were regarded as the representatives of the towns. According to another regulation of the Corresponding Act, the Convention could not comprise more than 49 members.

The working classes had hardly wakened into vigorous political existence than the first conflict arose with regard to party policy.

2.—QUESTIONS OF POLICY AND INTERNAL DISSENSIONS

The speeches delivered by O'Connor, Stephens, and Taylor, as well as by their friends in the North of England and in Scotland, roused misgivings in the Birmingham Union, the London Working Men's Association, and the great majority of the Scotch organisations. They considered the continual appeals to armed opposi-

tion to be prejudicial. The Birmingham Union laid the chief stress upon the organisation of the masses and their subordination to the leaders. The Londoners expected everything from the organisation, education, and independence of the working men and from democratic reform, and they were opposed to Chartism being mixed up in any way with the agitation against the new Poor Law, against Peel's Currency Acts or against any other social evils and abuses. Their watchword was: the concentration of all efforts in order to obtain democratic rule. The Scotch were convinced adherents of a peaceful policy, and considered every appeal to physical force to weaken the influence of moral power, and to be a vote of censure upon the invincible power of truth. Stephens took very little heed of these protests, whilst in the case of O'Connor and O'Brien both of these principles of policy ebbed and flowed according to events and the circumstances with which they had to deal.

During the last two months of 1838 Stephens was the apostle of terrorism. In a public meeting of 6,000 operatives at Norwich he exclaimed:—

"I tell the rich to make their will. The people are with us, the soldiers are not against us. The working men have produced all the wealth and they are miserable. They want no more than a fair day's wage for a fair day's work. There is one pin on which the title of all property is hung, and that is the unchangeable right of the working men to a comfortable subsistence. . . . The working man is the ground landlord of all the property in the kingdom. If he has it not he has a right to come down on the rich until he gets it."[1] The central organ of the Chartists reported these speeches fairly completely every week.

Particularly violent or incendiary phrases must, however, have been suppressed, for John Collins, who occasionally spoke from the same platform as Stephens, reported to the committee of the Birmingham Political Union that Stephens incited in the plainest language to the burning down of factories and to the murder of any particularly obnoxious police. Also in the form in which his speeches were printed in the *Northern Star* they

[1] *Northern Star*, November 10, 1838.

sound sufficiently terrorising. The Birmingham Union demanded the exclusion of Stephens from the movement. Also the newspapers of the middle classes made a great outcry against the agitation of terrorism. On the other hand, O'Connor stood by Stephens all the more steadfastly, and called upon the working men to form a bodyguard for Stephens and to defend him against his enemies with all their physical strength. At the close of 1838, O'Connor was nervous, exhausted, and mentally unbalanced as the result of his incessant, harrying agitation. In supporting Stephens's tactics there is no doubt that he exceeded the dictates of his reason. For he was of opinion that his energies were coming to an end, so that he aimed at some violent action to obtain the Charter in the shortest possible time. He even fixed a definite limit, viz., September 29, 1839, on which date the British people were to have attained the fulfilment of its desires.

He had barely heard of the dissatisfaction in Birmingham when he went there to defend Stephens and himself. In two meetings he laid down his point of view and made a determined appeal to working men " with fustian jackets, blistered hands and unshorn chins." On December 1 the Birmingham Political Union adopted, however, the following resolution :—

" This Union expressly and in the strongest manner condemns all exhortations to physical force for the purpose of procuring Universal Suffrage and the other objects of the National Petition."

A reconciliation actually took place between O'Connor and the Birmingham men, but the former decided to sever his connection with Attwood's society.

At the end of December O'Connor spoke in London and defended his line of action. Lovett opposed him, saying :—

" The whole physical force agitation is harmful and injurious to the movement. Muskets are not what are wanted, but education and schooling of the working people. Stephens and O'Connor are shattering the movement, in setting secondary demands in the foreground. Violent words do not slay the enemies but the friends of our movement. O'Connor wants to take everything by storm and to pass the Charter into law within a year.

All this hurry and haste, this bluster and menace of armed opposition can only lead to premature outbreaks and to the destruction of Chartism. If Stephens, O'Connor, and their adherents cannot realise this, many will leave the movement. What happened to the London National Union? Benbow's violent phrases crushed the life out of it. Agitation by moral weapons will never succeed so long as they are considered ineffectual in comparison to physical weapons."[1]

In December also a conference of the delegates from the Scotch organisations was held in Edinburgh in order to deal with the dissension. It adopted the following resolution:—

"This meeting deems it quite unnecessary to express any opinion on the question whether it be constitutional or no for the people to have arms and to use them in their own defence, because they have a full conviction that in the present struggle for liberty the exercise of moral power is completely adequate to obtain it in spite of all opposition.

"Relying with unshaken confidence on the efficacy of the many moral means the people possess for the achievement of their rights, we unequivocally denounce in the strongest terms any appeals to physical force, any exhortations to buy arms, being fully persuaded such appeals tend to diminish the vast influence of moral power. If the people would only use, with wisdom, vigour and perseverance, constitutional and peaceful means in the present struggle, no government whatever could long resist their just claims to civil and political equality. We disclaim any connection with those who use violent language, which is both illegal and injurious. The chief thing is organisation, payment of members' dues, part of which should be devoted to literature and lecturing, and to teach self-reform as the great and only source from which can spring social and political happiness, good government, pure and virtuous institutions."[2]

In spite of all the resolutions and statements, no decision was arrived at, which held good for the whole movement. Its policy continued to oscillate backwards and forwards, for owing to the obsolete Corresponding Act it was not possible for a

[1] *Northern Star*, Dec. 29, 1838. [2] *True Scotsman*, Dec. 8, 1838.

movement to possess unity of action. The only watchword that was universally accepted was: "Peacefully if we may; forcibly if we must." Under the circumstances of the time the "must" was a much more probable contingency than the "may."

3.—SOCIALIST AIM AND END

As the Chartist movement progressed increasing interest was shown in its ranks in the ultimate object to be attained and in social and economic problems. All the Chartists entertained definite aims, or, as they were called at the time, ulterior motives, for which they entered into the struggle for the Charter as a means to the end.

Owenism, which since 1835 had fallen to quite an unimportant position, received a fresh impetus in the years 1837–8, which it maintained until 1842. Its central organ, the *New Moral World*, which came into existence at the extinction of the *Crisis*, was removed to Manchester and Leeds. Owenite congresses and meetings again became well attended.

Letters from working men were very often directed to the editors of the Chartist press, asking them to print articles on capital and wage labour. On this point Bronterre O'Brien wrote as follows:—

"I am repeatedly urged by friends and correspondents to write some articles on wages or, what amounts to the same, on the conflicting claims of labour and capital. I would gladly comply, but what is the good of discussing what we have no power of interfering with? Of what possible use to broach theories which are incapable of being reduced to practice under the present condition of society? Besides, were I just now to promulgate what I believe to be the truth respecting capital, I should of necessity alarm and offend many parties which are zealously co-operating with us for universal suffrage. I think that until the question of universal suffrage is settled, we cannot with advantage enter deeply into that of labour and capital."[1]

[1] *Operative*, November 25, 1838; similarly in the *National Reformer*, February 25, 1837.

When O'Brien, by O'Connor's desire, condescended to write an article on questions affecting property, the issue of the paper in which it occurred had a record sale.[1] Most of the leaders held the same opinion as the expounder of Chartism. The ultimate aim was, therefore, designated by the characteristic expression, Ulterior Motives. There is no possible room for doubt as to the social-revolutionary aim of Chartism up to the year 1845. A Radical politician of the middle classes to whom this state of affairs was repugnant, wrote in 1839 :—

"Owenism, as those are aware who habitually watch the progress of opinion, is at present in one form or another, the actual creed of a great portion of the working classes."[2]

And in writing a survey of the year 1839 a Conservative politician philosophised as follows :—

"Apart from the political demands of the Chartists, the movement is characterised by other noteworthy conceptions. The hostility of the Chartists is directed less against the privileged condition of society, which up to the present was the particular object of democratic indignation, than against capitalists in general. The movement is, in fact, an insurrection which is expressly directed against the middle classes. A violent change in the system of government is demanded by the Chartists not for the purpose of receiving more power and privileges, but—as far as their aim permits of any definition—for the purpose of producing a hitherto non-existent condition of society, in which wage labour and capital do not exist at all."[3]

The Central organ of Chartism declared in the plainest terms : "Socialism and Chartism pursue the same aims, they only differ in their methods."[4] Nevertheless, there was one section of the orthodox Owenites, most notably Robert Owen himself, who remained unsympathetic or even hostile to Chartism. How is this strange phenomenon to be explained ? How did this attraction and repulsion originate ?

[1] *Northern Star*, June 2 and 16, 1838.
[2] *Westminster Review*, April, 1839, pp. 496 and *sqq.*
[3] *Annual Register*, 1839, I., 304.
[4] *Northern Star*, January 21, 1843 (leading article).

It is useless to seek for a satisfactory answer in the papers belonging to these two movements. At the best, the answer might by chance be discovered that it was parliamentarism that divided the two factions. The answer mistakes the symptom for the cause. In both camps there was a lack of thinkers on social philosophy who were in a position to work out the problem to its logical conclusion.

Both the problem and its solution are the result, however, of the difference that had arisen between a Utopia and a class movement, between a sect and a political party. The syndicalist phase (1832 to 1834) revealed the chasm existing between Utopia and class movement, whilst the commencement of the Chartist and parliamentary phase disclosed the contrast between sect and party. The masses of the working class who adhered to Chartism adopted the social criticism of Owenism, but they rejected its dogmas of salvation, which Owen considered as precisely the most important of his whole system, and he regarded Chartism therefore as a retrograde step.

The years 1839–45 mark the period when Owenism as a social system fell to pieces.

There is no doubt that the silence observed as to the final aims, in addition to the dissensions and polemics between the Owenite Socialists and the Chartists, were responsible for the social revolutionary character of Chartism being sometimes misunderstood. Another factor contributory to this misunderstanding was the demand of the trade unions: "A fair day's wages for a fair day's work." Quite apart from the fact that the logical consequence of this demand, as understood by the Chartists, implied the abolition of capitalism and the enforcement of the doctrine of natural law that the labourer ought to receive as his wage the whole product of his labour, the schoolmaster of Chartism allowed no doubt to exist as to his opinion that this demand could only be realised by parliament being ruled by the mass of the working men, that is to say, that they should make use of political power for the purpose of effecting an economic revolution in the interests of the proletariat. He informed his readers that: "'A fair day's

wage' is a very captivating sort of phrase, but may be moulded into as many different meanings. Under present conditions there is no possibility of realising that demand. The combined power of capital, machinery, and competition must continually reduce the wages and prospects of working men to promote their interests by trades union means alone. Trades unions, at best, can only prevent the employers cutting down the wages of mechanics and artisans to the level of agricultural labour. The trade union is only in some degree efficacious in those branches of labour in which the personal skill of the mechanic still plays an important part. Is there any hope that without an entire change of the system the operative will be able to command a fair day's wage for a fair day's work ? The thing is, in my opinion, impossible."[1]

Even Lovett's declaration that capital, land, and labour belong to one another and render production possible[2] must not be interpreted in a middle class sense. The English working men considered capital to mean stored-up labour. Even at the present day they adhere to this definition.[3]

The full meaning of the Charter for the Chartist masses of the North of England was most clearly defined by Stephens in the great meeting on Kersal Moor, near Manchester :—

"The principle of the resolution on which I have to speak is a principle which every man was obliged to acknowledge—the principle which acknowledged the right of every man that breathes God's free air and trod upon God's free earth to have his home and his hearth, and his wife and his children, as securely guaranteed to him as to any right the aristocracy has created. This question of universal suffrage is a knife and fork question, after all, a bread and cheese question, notwithstanding all that has been said against it ; and if any man should ask me what I mean by universal suffrage I should reply : That every working man in the land has the right to have a good coat on his back, a comfortable abode in which to shelter himself and his family, a good dinner upon his table, and no more work than is necessary

[1] *Operative*, November 4, 1838. [2] *Sun*, September 13, 1838.
[3] *Daily Herald*, May 12, 1912.

to keep him in good health, and so much wages for his work as should keep him in plenty and afford him the enjoyment of all the blessings of life, which a reasonable man could desire. . . . Behind universal suffrage I want to see that knowledge in the mind, that principle in the heart, that power in the conscience, that strength in the right arm that would enable the working man to meet his master boldly, upright on his feet, without the brand mark of the bondman upon his brow, and without the blush of shame and slavery upon his cheek. I want to see the working man as free in the mill as when he goes into the wilderness —as free spoken when he goes for his wages as he is when he spends a part of it with his companion. I want to see every man so free as to speak his mind, act according to his conscience, and do no one any injury. . . . I second the resolution, and shall support it with heart and soul, so far as I can, and as far as you can with me if you acted the same way, and we shall ultimately carry the Charter."[1]

No lengthy explanation is necessary to arrive at the conclusion that Stephens's ideal could not be realised under capitalist conditions and that it implies a transitional period from Capitalism to Socialism.

These were the aims cherished by the working men when they entered into the Chartist struggle and elected delegates to the National Convention.[2]

[1] *Northern Star*, September 29, 1838.

[2] Stephens was also elected a delegate, but he was arrested at the end of December, 1838.

IV

THE GENERAL CONVENTION

I.—THE OPENING OF THE CONVENTION

The immediate result of the efforts made during 1838 was the National Convention, which met in London on February 4, 1839, for the purpose of inducing parliament to adopt the National Petition and the People's Charter. The Convention was the first Labour Parliament in Great Britain. Its original title was the National Convention, but since that name revived recollections of the French Revolution and contributed to increase the enmity of the ruling classes towards Chartism, the Chartist leaders agreed to alter it. From this time it was called: "The General Convention of the Industrious Classes of Great Britain."

The number of the delegates elected in the various towns and districts was 56, 53 of whom accepted their mandates. The delegates were not by any means united in their views and plans. They gradually formed three parties, a Right, a Left, and a Centre. The Right, to which J. P. Cobbett, Hadley, Salt, and Wade belonged, was dead against any serious contest or any violent speech, and was in favour of the Convention acting strictly within the letter of the law. The great majority of the Convention, including O'Connor, Lovett, and O'Brien, were for legal and constitutional means; by "constitutional" they understood struggles and resistance to constituted authority interpreted by O'Connor, on the one hand, probably as street fighting, whilst Lovett, on the other, would be thinking of demonstrations and protests, possibly leading to trials and imprisonment of delegates. The Left consisted of Taylor, Cardo, Ryder, Harney, Frost, Burns, Bussey, Marsden, and Lowery, who by degrees arrived at the firm conviction that insurrection was to be preferred to any number of speeches or petitions.

Few indeed of the delegates entered the Convention with clearly defined views of the policy to be adopted. Broadly speaking, there was first of all a distinct endeavour to promote the objects of the Convention; to encourage the masses to sign the Petition, to enlist the interest of members of parliament for the Petition and the Charter, and to enlighten the public opinion of the Charter by their discussions. All of them were well aware of the fact that strong divergences of opinion as to policy existed amongst the delegates; they exerted themselves, however, to gloss over in silence their points of difference, to lay stress on their common principles and to work together in harmony. This was particularly evident in the election of Lovett to the secretaryship of the Convention. For this office he had been proposed by John Collins. The Convention seemed to be practically unanimous in adopting this proposal, when O'Brien rose and opposed it. He indicated that Lovett's policy might not be acceptable to the delegates of the North; he urged the difference between the views of the London Working Men's Association and those of the organisations in the North of England, and he moved that other names should be proposed. Delegates from all parts of the country spoke in opposition to O'Brien, and recommended that Lovett should be elected as secretary. O'Brien then withdrew his motion, whereupon Lovett was unanimously elected to be permanent secretary of the first labour parliament in Great Britain. John Taylor, in his materials for a history of the Convention, refers thus to the circumstance:—

"While I am bound to confess that I came to London much prejudiced against Lovett and all who belonged to the Working Men's Association, looking upon them as no better than tools of the Whigs. . . . I will unhesitatingly affirm now that no appointment could have given more satisfaction to the Convention or to the country, nor could any man have surpassed William Lovett in talent, in energy, and in honesty." [1]

[1] Place, MSS. 27831, p. 143. Taylor's materials appeared in one of the Chartist papers of the North of England or of Scotland; Place collected the cuttings, but did not quote the title of the newspaper.

During the first week of the Convention £700 odd was collected in party contributions. The Convention appointed its most prominent orators to be "missionaries," in order to enlighten the masses of the working classes concerning the nature and significance of the Charter and to complete the organisations. It also appointed a committee upon whom the task devolved of getting into communication with members of parliament and winning them over to support the Petition and the Charter, and to elicit information from them as to the attitude of parliament to the Charter. The views of many of the members of parliament were unknown to the labour leaders; on the other hand, the government lost no time in announcing its position with regard to Chartism.

On February 5, 1839, one day after the meeting of the Convention, parliament was opened with a Queen's Speech, in which the following statement was made among others:—

"I have observed with pain the persevering efforts which have been made in some parts of the country to excite my subjects to disobedience and resistance to the law, and to recommend dangerous and illegal practices." [1]

This was a distinct hint to the Chartists that the government was only waiting for an opportunity to set the forces of the State in movement against the reformers. The Convention replied with an address to the people, in which the attention of the Queen and the government was called to the impropriety of their warning. The address also contained a threat of armed resistance:

"If forced to resort to self-defence, even to that last tribunal we are prepared to appeal rather than continue in bondage, and rather to lay our heads upon the block as freemen than to rest them on the pillow as slaves. Interference by force, however, depends not upon us; and if the infatuation of those in power prompt them to have recourse to it, so surely as in the exercise of it they dare to trench upon the liberties of Britons, so surely shall they be met with that stern resolve which prompts men either to conquer or die." [2]

[1] *Times*, February 6, 1839. [2] *Charter*, February 17, 1839.

The Convention was denuded of nearly half the number of its members by the appointment of the delegates sent on tour as missionaries for the purpose of agitating, and also by the withdrawal of members to serve on committees. On this account the discussions in the public sittings were seldom exhaustive or systematic. The Convention sat with interruptions until September 14, 1839; yet there were only two subjects which occupied the time of the Convention, viz., the attitude towards the free trade agitation and the question of the "ulterior measures" which were to be adopted if parliament rejected the Petition and the Charter. The rules for the attitude of the working classes towards the Anti-Corn Law agitation were laid down by the Convention without opposition. It was quite a different matter with the ulterior measures; in the discussions of this critical question, which also included that of arming and the general strike, the opposing views were sharply divided, leading finally to secessions, divisions, and imprisonments.

2.—DISCUSSION ON FREE TRADE

In 1836—the year when the London Working Men's Association was founded—some Radical members of Parliament, George Grote, J. Hume, Molesworth, and Roebuck, met one day and called the Anti-Corn-Law Association into being. In spite of the great literary reputation and oratorical gifts of its founders, and notwithstanding their political prestige, the association made no progress. The working men were turning their attention to Universal Suffrage and to the political organisation of their class. The London middle classes, such as the shopkeepers, traders, tradesmen, and financiers, were not particularly interested in a question which mainly affected the industrial classes of the Midlands and the North of England. Moreover, London had ceased to be the centre for popular agitations. The great political period of the metropolis of the British Empire extended from 1770 to 1831, when the issue was the overthrow of the oligarchy and the rise of the middle classes to power. Whilst the struggle for this reform was in progress the economic and political centre of gravity was shifted to the North of England,

to the great centres of industry, which had been called into existence between 1770 and 1830 by the Industrial Revolution. London acquired in the main a commercial, intellectual, administrative, and financial character; its interests increased in diversity and variety, scattering its representatives apart. This tendency became intensified by the migration to the suburbs, by extensive building, and the wide area occupied by the group of towns which goes by the name of London. The London Working Men's Association had already experienced the disruptive and dispersive influence of London life. The Owenites gradually had the same experience; and even the Radical free traders soon discovered that they were not in a position to create a popular agitation in favour of their idea. The Anti-Corn Law Association pined away, and could neither live nor die, for on the one hand it was born in unfavourable surroundings, whilst on the other hand it corresponded to certain economic interests of the country and without doubt justified its existence. It possessed an ably and cleverly managed organ in the *Sun*; it had popular leaders; all it lacked was the backing of the masses. In 1837, when the political agitation of the working men, known a year later as Chartism, began to arrest the attention of the nation, the *Sun* made the attempt to win over the working men to the side of the Anti-Corn Law Association. The Radical operatives had at all times opposed the landed interests; even the *Poor Man's Guardian* had often declared for free trade; the chief Labour leaders saw eye to eye with the Radical members of parliament. Why, then, should it not be possible to induce the masses to enter the fight against the Corn Laws? To be sure, the working men stood above all for the introduction of universal suffrage. It was not possible, however, for this demand to be realised immediately in spite of its inherent justice; let the working men therefore assist the middle classes first of all in their fight against the Corn Laws; a victorious issue of this struggle would also be beneficial to the working men and would in addition weaken the economic position of the landed nobility; in this manner the political power of the latter, which was always opposed to progress, would be severely crippled. When the

Corn Laws had been abolished the middle classes would work for the introduction of universal suffrage.

This attempt on the part of the *Sun* missed fire, and its arguments deepened the mistrust of the London Working Men's Association towards the free traders. The working men knew the value of the promises of the middle classes from their experiences in the years 1830–1832, and the attempt to enlist them in the free trade campaign appeared to them to be an underhand trick to divert their attention from the fight for universal suffrage.

The distrust, moreover, was mutual. The leaders of the Anti-Corn Law Association were in favour of universal suffrage, but they were of opinion that circumstances were not yet in its favour. The operatives were in a bad material condition, and would therefore vote against the propertied classes, regardless of consequences, and overwhelm them by force of numbers. In the United States of America, where differences of class were not so accentuated, universal suffrage might indeed work well. Not so in England, however, where wealth and poverty were sharply contrasted and divided society into antagonistic classes. England was standing on the eve of a great trial of strength between Capital and Labour; it would therefore be advisable to bring the working men into a calmer state of mind by a sounder trade policy, and to provide them first of all with cheaper means of subsistence and with good employment. After this policy had led to the desired results then universal suffrage might be granted to them.

Both parties, in their mutual distrust, misunderstood each other, and O'Brien and O'Connor did their utmost to increase the distrust between the working men and the Radicals.

About two weeks before the London meeting of September 17, 1837, in favour of the Charter, the *Sun* printed a leading article, in which it was stated that:—

"The 17th inst., on which the Chartists are to hold their great meeting at Westminster, rapidly approaches. According to our view, that meeting will lead either to immediate benefit, or much mischief, as it is conducted to promote a repeal of the Corn

Laws or to procure the establishment of the People's Charter. All those who wish to stave off, as long as possible, the trial of strength between the proprietary and working classes, ought, we think, to direct that meeting to the attainment of the former object. Should resolutions be passed in favour of now agitating for the People's Charter, the question of the Corn Laws will for the moment be stifled, and the capitalists, who are known to dread the labourers, will at once unite to oppose them to the utmost of their power. Not only will the opportunity be lost of effecting a great practical good by procuring the repeal of the Starvation Laws, but angry agitation and great confusion, it is to be apprehended, will ensue." [1] The *Sun* advises those people who attend the meeting to move an amendment that it would be better to direct the energies of the people to "the abolition of the accursed Corn Laws, this aim having more prospect of being attained than the Charter."

A few days later the same newspaper declared :—

"It is said by some of the speakers at popular meetings that the observations made of late on the subject of the Corn Laws are designed to divert the attention of the people from the discussion of the more important question of the Charter. Even the *Spectator* of last Saturday asserted that there is an attempt on the part of the ministerial press to divert the attention of the working classes from political changes to the overthrow of the Corn Laws ; the desperate Whigs throw their cry of the Corn Laws amongst the working classes as a tub to a whale. This is totally without foundation. The assertion is borrowed from the *Times* and the *Standard*. . . . We admit the justice of universal suffrage, but we deny the prudence of bringing it forward now, when there is no earthly chance of its being carried by this parliament, instead of bending all their energies to get rid of the Corn Laws."

Lovett rejected with scorn this advice of the free traders, and stoutly maintained that free trade was merely a tub for the proletarian whale. He was of opinion that universal suffrage

[1] *Sun*, September 5, 1837.
[2] *Ibid.*, September 10, 11, 12 and 18, 1837.

stood first and foremost ; when this had been obtained, then there would be a possibility of securing reforms in the cause of freedom, and among them the abolition of the corn taxes.

The London Anti-Corn Law Association was incapable of accomplishing anything. Its place was taken by the Anti-Corn Law Association founded in Manchester in October, 1838, which a year later became known throughout the world as the Anti-Corn Law League. Richard Cobden soon joined it and became the most important of its agitators and leaders. He was opposed to compromise and preached a class war against landowners. He considered the corn duties to be the greatest hindrance in the way of any progress in English industries. He immediately drew up a petition to parliament, in which he referred to the increase in foreign competition, and argued that it could be successfully countered by England only if it decided to abolish the Corn Laws.

Two answers were given to the question as to how free trade could neutralise the effect of foreign competition. The answer given by the leaders of this agitation can be summarised as follows : The more the masses have to pay for the means of subsistence, the less they are able to spend on manufactured goods. On this account the internal demand for manufactured articles is low. The abolition of the corn taxes would in itself reduce the price of food, and the people would therefore be in a position to spend more on manufactured goods and to increase the demand for them. An increase of this demand implies a greater industrial activity, more employment, and higher wages. Contentment would again visit the masses, and would make an end of all the struggles for trades unionism and for social reform. The abolition of the corn taxes would then open the English market to foreign corn, foreign agriculture would obtain a higher revenue, and the agricultural nations would have less reason to turn to industrial pursuits, thereby entering into competition with Englishmen. In return for their corn they will be able to obtain articles of English manufacture at a cheaper price than if they produced them themselves. It was only the English corn duties, and not, as the Tories argued, the Continental system of

Napoleon[1] that induced Prussia to build factories and to drive out English trade by extremely low wages. If foreign countries remain predominantly agricultural in character they will purchase English goods, thereby ensuring industrial prosperity for England, and industrial prosperity signifies high wages for working men and contentment in their homes. The abolition of the corn taxes would, therefore, bring happiness and social peace to England.

The other answer to the question was to the effect that free trade means low prices for means of subsistence, and cheap food means low wages, and it is only low wages that can put England in a position to meet foreign competition successfully, for foreign competition is based upon the low wages which are paid to operatives abroad.

The principle of political economy that was at the bottom of both of these answers was at that time uncontested, viz., that wages depended on the prices of the necessaries of life, or in other words, that wages are nothing else than the amount of the necessaries of life which are required by the working classes. The former answer, however, included also the idea that supply and demand exert some additional influence upon the scale of wages: the greater the demand for operatives, the higher the rise of wages above the level of the minimum of the necessaries requisite to life.

Judging by the first answer, the working men would be particularly interested in the abolition of the corn taxes; this was the view adopted by Cobden and the majority of the Liberal free traders. According to the second answer, the whole question of free trade was entirely without significance for the working man: the iron law of wages would prevail, with or without free trade, until the working men should replace the whole capitalist system by the Socialist system, or until the working man should exercise a powerful influence in parliament by means of universal suffrage, and could protect the produce of their work by legislative powers.

These statements of divergent views were voiced in meetings and in the press as early as 1838.

[1] The Tory view of the beginning of German manufactures appears to be historically correct.

As already mentioned, parliament met on February 5, 1839, and the Chartist Convention on the previous day. At the same time the leaders of the Anti-Corn Law agitation met in conference in London, in order to present their petition to parliament, to bring on a debate by means of concerted action on the part of the Liberal members, such as Villiers, Molesworth, Clay, and Hume. The debate took place in the middle of March ; it lasted four days, and was concluded, as in previous years, by a rejection of the free trade motion. Clay, a Liberal member, made a particularly remarkable speech, in which he disposed of the allegation that the people took no interest in the free trade agitation, and that the free traders were speculating on a reduction of wages. On this point he made the following rejoinder :—

" Wages would not fall because the Corn Laws were repealed, but because, in our struggle with foreign manufactures, it would be impossible to get a profit enabling us to pay high wages. . . . It is said the working classes kept aloof, but why ? Is it because they believe in the Corn Laws ? No ! but because they don't expect relief from a parliament as at present constituted. Again, they say, if we refuse to join the middle classes in procuring repeal they will join us in demanding the People's Charter. Let the House beware lest they make good that prophecy, lest in the utter hopelessness of seeing justice done in this matter it drives the middle classes to make common cause with the working classes, and to force on a change in our form of government as the only means of ridding themselves of what they feel to be an intolerable oppression. As yet the members of this House had the time to prevent the alliance—as yet they might withdraw all the better portion, even of the working classes, the honest and well-intentioned, from the guidance of the visionary, the fanatic, the revolutionist, and the incendiary." [1]

Naturally, Clay comprised in this category Stephens, Oastler, Owen, O'Brien, and O'Connor. The spokesmen of the Chartist opposition against the free trade agitation were O'Connor and O'Brien. O'Connor argued as follows :—

[1] *Times*, March 14, 1839 ; Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates*, third series, vol. 46, pp. 516–519.

"The Anti-Corn Law Association is composed principally of master manufacturers, whose interest is to buy labour at the cheapest market and sell the produce of labour at the dearest market. Machinery will always help the employer to buy labour cheap. . . . The League is composed of the owners of machinery, and machinery is the great, the monster enemy of an unrepresented people. It is the new-born influence of the master manufacturers which forced the Reform Bill from the Tory Party. And for the last ten years they have gone on establishing the details by which the Bill should be made beneficial to their order. Poor Law, Corporation Reform Bill, Rural Police Bill, appointment of Whig magistrates, and now they require the abolition of the Corn Laws. Since machinery and capital became represented in the House of Commons the hostility between master and man has become greater every year, and this has arisen from the discovery made by the working classes that capital thinks of nothing else but of the subjugation of labour. Landlords treat their labourers as a rule well, and are controlled by the public opinion of their order, while manufacturers have no other rule but buying cheap and selling dear. . . . Trade and industry have denationalised Englishmen and made them cosmopolitan."[1]

This was the strain in which the most popular of the Chartists spoke. It was not without reason that O'Brien reproached O'Connor with arguing like a country squire, whilst the subject ought to be approached from a democratic standpoint.[2]

O'Brien wrote a great deal against the free trade agitation; but there were not many ideas underlying his articles. His arguments may be thus summed up:—

The difference in the interests of the middle and the working classes cannot be bridged. Free trade is a policy of the middle classes and, therefore, can be of no use to the working men. The rate of wages depends on the prices of the necessaries of life; it rises and falls with them. The abolition of the Corn Laws will

[1] O'Connor, *The Trial of Feargus O'Connor*, 1843. Introduction, v.–viii.

[2] *British Statesman*, November 12, 1842.

lower the price of food, and hence will lower wages ; and in the interests of the working man we cannot desire this contingency. It may be admitted that free trade will revive industry, and that business will be brisker—but were wages raised by the enormous increase in trade which has taken place since 1688 ? No ! Therefore, free trade cannot bring the working men the blessings promised by its advocates.[1]

The hostility between Chartists and free traders increased rapidly. The Chartists dubbed the free trade agitators " Political Pedlars," and the latter accused the Chartist leaders of being in the pay of the landowners. From 1841 to 1844 there was not a single free trade meeting at which Chartists were not also present, in order to move amendments to the free trade resolutions and to call upon the audience to work first of all for the Charter. Not infrequently the partisans of the two agitations came into open collision with each other, especially when the Chartists were of the opinion that free speech was denied to their speakers at free trade meetings. The Chartists got on the nerves of the Anti-Corn Law agitators, and Cobden believed the Chartists had made him the particular object of their hostility.[2]

Thus from the very beginning these strained relations prevailed between Chartism and the free trade agitation. The Convention, therefore, considered it necessary to lose no time in defining their position on this question, and to give a clear lead to the working classes. James Bronterre O'Brien was entrusted with drawing up a report. He submitted the following resolution :—

" The Convention is convinced that at the present eventful crisis it is indispensably necessary that the people's undivided attention should be concentrated upon the National Petition alone, to the exclusion of all others ; being also convinced that the present agitation for a repeal of the Corn Laws was intended, and does actually tend to divert the working classes from their paramount object ; and being further of opinion that such an unconditional repeal as would alone be likely to receive the

[1] *Operative*, November 5, 1838 ; *British Statesman*, October 29, November 5, 12 and 26, 1842.

[2] Thomas Frost, *Forty Years' Recollections*, 1880, pp. 33–34.

sanction of the Anti-Corn Law agitation would be rather injurious than otherwise to the interests of the poorer classes: we, the delegates of the Convention do, therefore, most earnestly recommend our constituents in particular and the unrepresented classes in general to deprecate and oppose all and every agitation for or against a repeal of the Corn Laws until the fate of the National Petition and People's Charter shall have been determined by the legislature, so far as the legislature is able to determine it."[1]

In moving his resolution O'Brien denounced the free trade agitators as stockjobbers and tricksters, whose agitation was only calculated to enrich speculators and Jews, to lower the wages of working men, and to divert the attention of the masses from the Chartist agitation.

O'Brien's speech was received with general applause. His resolution was supported by all the speakers, but more especially by Attwood's adherents. We may omit their speeches; they were full of satisfaction with the triumph of their master's doctrines; Attwood's mantle had fallen upon O'Brien, the teacher of Chartism. John Collins was, moreover, of opinion that the whole aim of the free traders was to reduce the wages of the English workmen to the level of the Prussian, since Prussia had become a serious competitor of English textiles.

O'Brien's resolution was carried unanimously. The Chartists were guided by it during the whole period of the Anti-Corn Law agitation. Here and there a few workmen indeed followed Cobden, but the majority kept apart. Nevertheless, it was the Chartist agitation, as we shall see later on, that broke down the opposition of the Whigs and of a section of the Tories to the abolition of the Corn Laws and paved the way for the victory of free trade. If it had not been for the revolutionary agitation of the British working classes, Cobden and Bright would never have attained their object.

3.—DISSENSION IN THE CONVENTION

Even during the first few weeks of its existence dissensions broke out in the meetings of the Convention, in spite of the

[1] *Charter*, February 10, 1839.

avoidance of all theoretical discussions and in spite of the unanimity of opinion as to the importance of the Charter to the exclusion of all other subjects. The cause of the dissensions was to be sought in the differences of opinion on the "ulterior measures" to be adopted, in the event of Parliament rejecting the Petition or the Charter. The old contrast between moral and physical force did not permit of any compromise. The question of ulterior measures occupied the attention of the great majority of the delegates, who either felt or were convinced that the Charter had no chance whatever of being adopted by Parliament.

What was to be done? What measures were to be taken if the moral influence of the discussions of the Convention, of the petitions of the people, of the meetings and great manifestoes of the masses were all to be of no avail?

In reading the reports of the Convention, it is possible even at the present day to realise the mental anguish endured by the delegates in attempting to answer these questions. On the one hand, they felt a repugnance to an open and full exchange of opinions, on the other hand they made the most anxious efforts to obtain an answer to their enquiries. There was no question of any dread of legal consequences, any dread of the power of the government, but of solicitude for the stability of the Convention and for the united action of the Chartist agitation. Discussions on this point commenced in the second week of the Convention (February 11 to 17, 1839); they were deferred, resumed, and again deferred until the course of events rendered it impossible to postpone a decision.

Hugh Craig, one of the Scotch delegates, proposed the following motion on February 8:—

"That on an early day the Convention take into consideration what ulterior means they would employ, or what measures they would resort to or recommend to the industrial classes for speedily obtaining and firmly securing their political rights, should it unfortunately happen that the delegates fail in their attempt to convince the members of the House of Commons of the justice of the principles of the People's Charter."

The motion came on for discussion on February 11. Craig moved it with merely a brief comment that a clear pronouncement on the subject would assist in winning over those who were still in doubt as to the Chartists being in earnest. Taylor opposed, for it should not be assumed in advance that parliament would be likely to oppose the wishes of the people; a pronouncement of this sort would only place unnecessary impediments in the way of the delegates appointed by the Convention to influence members of parliament in favour of the Petition and the Charter. O'Connor supported the motion, for the best way was to go with the National Petition in one hand and with the ulterior measures in the other and to approach parliament with both hands. O'Brien supported Taylor's views; the Convention ought to act as if it expected a successful issue for the Charter. It would be absurd to talk of ulterior measures unless two or three million signatures backed up the Petition. If parliament were then to reject it, the indignation of the people would soon furnish materials for ulterior measures. Salt was also of opinion that the main point was the organisation of the people; if this were strong enough the tyrants would be forced to adopt views more consonant with liberty. Vincent moved an amendment, recommending the appointment of a committee to consider and determine what measures should be adopted in the event of failure with the legislature, and to report thereon to the Convention.

Vincent's amendment proved to be a good way out of a delicate situation and was therefore adopted.

Cobbett expressed dissatisfaction with this expedient, and regarded it as indicating the resolve of the majority of the Convention not to acquiesce in the rejection of the Petition; and he therefore resigned from the Convention.

J. P. Cobbett, a strict legalist, was the first to strike a note of discord in the Convention, and he was followed by Harney, the fiery revolutionist, who at that time was barely twenty-two years old, and had got obsessed with the idea of being a second Marat in the English Convention. He soon drew comparisons between the French and English Conventions, much to the disadvantage

of the latter. He had set his mind on action, on deeds of heroism, whilst the delegates, on the other hand, were busy with the Petition, avoided sharp words, and were careful not to give the slightest cause of offence to the Queen and the Girondists. "*Nous sommes trahis!*" We are betrayed; the traitors are ruining the revolution! He donned the Phrygian cap and called the people into the meetings. The delegates Ryder and Marsden rallied to his side, and came to the conclusion that "there were only eight honest men in the Convention."[1] They did not reveal the names of the other five. "The truth is," exclaimed Harney, "that there is only one way of obtaining the Charter, namely insurrection"![2] From the month of March his tongue could no longer be curbed. In April one of his friends founded the *London Democrat*, a weekly, which is a mine of Anarchist phrases. Here is a sample:—

"Organisation won't do it. It won't be the organised masses that will carry the victory. Oh, no! That depends upon the outcast, friendless beings, who have no house to go to, no food to satisfy the cravings of hunger, no covering to keep them warm, or even to make them look decent, no wherewithal to render their lives worth preserving? The battle will be fought and won by those who hide themselves from the gaze of the world, through the cruel operations of unjust laws. The battle will be fought by brigands as they are called."[3]

Harney himself gave the people the following advice:—

"When parliamentary elections take place let all the unrepresented elect Chartists. There is no doubt that nine-tenths of the elected will be Universal Suffrage men. To elect representatives without enabling them to take their seats in the legislature would be the veriest farce imaginable. To complete the good work it will be necessary that each representative should be furnished with a bodyguard of sturdy *sans-culottes*, some thousands strong. By the time the whole of the representatives arrived in the environs of the metropolis they would have with them not less than a million men. This would settle the matter.

[1] *Charter*, April 28, 1839. [2] *London Democrat*, May 4, 1839.
[3] *Ibid.*, May 18, 1839.

They would encamp for one night on Hampstead Heath and then march to Parliament Street. Should the plutocratic-elected scoundrels be fool enough to have taken their places in the tax trap, the voice of the people, crying, 'Make place for better men!' would scatter them like chaff before the wind, or should they hesitate to fly the job will soon be settled by their being tied neck and heels and flung into the Thames."[1]

He was aided and abetted by Major Beniowski, a refugee from the Polish insurrection of 1831. Beniowski contributed articles regularly to the *London Democrat* on the Polish revolution, on strategy and tactics, on the possibility of an invasion of England, and on the worthlessness of the Convention. Later on he was singled out by the extreme Left of the Convention to head the insurrection in South Wales.

From March, 1839, onwards the delegates Harney, Ryder, and Marsden held meetings in London, and encouraged the people to arm themselves and to make other preparations for opposing force by force. They sent a resolution to the Convention to the effect that if the delegates really had the courage the Charter would become law in four weeks' time.[2] A motion to expel Harney and his associates was rejected, on the ground that the Convention was not armed with the authority to declare the mandates of the people to be null and void. On the other hand a vote of censure was passed upon them, but this did not mend matters. On March 11 a crowded meeting was held in London at the "Crown and Anchor," Strand, London, W.C., in which the delegates Frost, O'Connor, Harney, and other speakers adopted a threatening tone. The speakers called upon the masses to prepare for the coming fight. This incitement to arms furnished an opportunity to the anti-Chartist newspapers to draw attention to the true character of the agitation and to point out to the nation the dangers with which it was threatened. The newspaper reports had a deterrent effect and were the cause of the resignation of three of the Birmingham delegates, Hadley, Salt, and Douglas.[3]

[1] *London Democrat*, April 27, 1839. [2] *Charter*, March 10, 1839.
[3] *Ibid.*, April 7, 1839.

Although the vacant places were soon filled up again, the Convention suffered both in power and prestige. The withdrawal of the adherents of constitutional tactics left the field open to the advocates of armed resistance, and discussions in the Convention became long and frequent on the constitutional right of the people to carry arms. Several delegates were of opinion that the whole discussion was superfluous, since this right was beyond all question. One of the delegates asked tersely and curtly: "What would we think of a nation of slaves asking legal opinion as to the right of arming themselves?" Most of the delegates were in agreement with this view. Only one delegate, Alexander Halley, made the attempt to bring his colleagues to a calmer frame of mind. He appealed to them as follows:—

"What purpose has this discussion? Can we make this question a practical one? Was it, in fact, of any use in this question of universal suffrage? Can we have a commissariat department? Was it intended to have drilling masters and to prepare for actual war? I feel truly surprised that such a question should occupy us so long when so small a proportion of the people are with us. We are accused of being violent men, who would adopt violent means to accomplish their purpose. Will not the adoption of such a motion afford confirmation of this charge?"

The Convention finally adopted a motion of Dr. Fletcher, declaring that the right of the people to arm was beyond all question and needed no discussion.

The actual cause of this discussion was the conviction that had been arrived at that the Petition had no chance of being accepted by parliament. This was the upshot of the report which was furnished to the Convention by the committee appointed to enter into communication with members of parliament.[1] The statements made on the right to arm were a demonstration and a protest against parliament. In the fourth week of April the Convention issued a short manifesto to the people, containing the information that it was in vain for the people to expect any relief from those in authority. "The Convention

[1] Compare Disraeli, *Sybil*, book 4, chapter 5.

have no hopes other than in the firmness and energy of the people. Public meetings should be holden in as many places as possible during Whitsun week, to direct what ulterior measures shall be adopted. Delegates from the Convention will attend as many of these meetings as their numbers will allow."

At the same time the delegates Patrick Matthew and Dr. A. S. Wade handed in their resignations, since they regarded a peaceful policy to be the only right line of action. In Lancashire and Wales numerous Chartists provided themselves with pikes and muskets ; in other districts the workmen engaged in military exercises ; but there was no organised plan, and their proceeding was more likely to weaken the agitation than to strengthen it. On April 29 the Welshmen rose up in revolt at Llanidloes, but it naturally proved abortive, and ended in the arrest of seventeen Chartists. Owing to the absence of any strong organisation it was not possible for the leaders to obtain exact information concerning the arming of the people, and there was free play for the imagination on this point. The agents of the government sent in reports on the extent of the armed preparations, with the result that the Cabinet took special precautions for the army and police to be in readiness for emergencies. The garrisons of the Midlands and the North of England were strengthened and placed under a single command. On May 3 Lord John Russell, in his capacity of Home Secretary, authorised the magistrates and justices of the peace to confiscate the weapons of civilians in all suspicious cases, and also to declare all meetings illegal to which people came armed with weapons. Finally, he encouraged all well-intentioned citizens to form " societies of volunteers for the protection of life, liberty, and property."

In the second week of May the excitement of the masses in the Midlands and the North of England rose to a dangerous pitch. A contributory cause was the introduction of a rural police, which up to that time was not only unknown in the rural districts, but even in many towns. Birmingham, for instance, had no police. The Chartists regarded this arrangement as a blow directed against themselves, and on this account they made a call to arms. A formidable conflict between the people and the armed forces

of the State seemed to be unavoidable. On the one hand, the Convention began to take precautionary measures for its own safety, on the other hand it wished to be nearer to the seat of war. On May 10 O'Connor, therefore, brought forward a motion to adjourn the sittings of the Convention from London to Birmingham. Brown, the Birmingham delegate, declared that "the people of Birmingham were ready for anything, and would stand forth as a wall of brass in protection of the Convention." The Convention resolved upon this step.

During the sitting of the Convention in London the National Rent steadily poured in. In the week ending May 12 it amounted to £86.

The Petition had already been signed by 1,250,000 people; it weighed six hundredweight, and was two miles long. It was placed on a huge wagon decorated with banners.

4.—THE SESSION AT BIRMINGHAM AND THE ULTERIOR MEASURES

On May 13, 1839, the delegates of the Convention arrived in Birmingham, and were enthusiastically received by 50,000 working men, who formed a square, put the delegates in the middle, and marched to the place of meeting. The working men indicated by this action that they were ready to protect their delegates from the police and the soldiers. The authorities had also made preparations; even at an early hour in the morning infantry and artillery marched in and were held in readiness for action. On the following day the Convention published the report of the committee on ulterior measures in the form of a manifesto, which, after a fierce onslaught on the Whigs and their ambiguities, proceeds:—

"From numerous communications we received we believe you expect us to collect the will and intentions of the country respecting the most efficient means for causing the People's Charter to become the law of the land. Anxious, therefore, clearly to ascertain the opinions and determinations of the people in the shortest possible time, and doubly anxious to secure their righteous objects bloodless and stainless, we respectfully submit the following propositions for your serious consideration:

"That at all the simultaneous public meetings to be held for the purpose of petitioning the Queen to call good men to her councils, as well as at all subsequent meetings of your unions or associations up to the 1st of July, you submit the following questions to the people there assembled:—

"1. Whether they will be prepared, at the request of the Convention, to withdraw all sums of money they may individually or collectively have placed in savings banks, private banks, or in the hands of any person hostile to their just rights? Whether, at the same request, they will be prepared immediately to convert all their paper money into gold and silver?[1] (2) Whether, if the Convention shall determine that a sacred month (general strike) will be necessary to prepare the millions to secure the Charter of their political salvation, they will firmly resolve to abstain from their labours during that period. (3) Whether they would refuse payment of rents, rates, and taxes? (4) Whether, according to their old constitutional right, they have prepared themselves with the arms of free men to defend the laws and constitutional privileges their ancestors bequeathed to them? (5) Whether they will provide themselves with Chartist candidates, so as to be prepared to propose them for their representatives at the next general election; and if returned by show of hands, such candidates to consider themselves veritable representatives of the people, to meet in London at a time hereafter to be determined on? (6) Whether they will resolve to deal exclusively with Chartists; and in all cases of persecution rally around and protect all those who may suffer in this righteous cause? (7) Whether, by all means in their power, they will perseveringly contend for the great objects of the People's Charter, and resolve that no counter-agitation for a less measure of justice shall divert them from this righteous object? (8) Whether they would abstain from purchasing newspapers which opposed them? (9) Whether the people will determine to obey all the just and constitutional requests of the majority of the Convention?"[2]

[1] This form of pressure would mean a run on the banks and on the Bank of England.

[2] *Charter*, May 19, 1839.

These questions contained the ulterior measures, concerning which the Convention wished to ascertain whether they could be carried out.

The Convention resolved, in addition, to adjourn from May 16 to July 1, in order to give the delegates the opportunity to hold mass meetings in Whit week, and to learn whether and to what extent the ulterior measures could be carried out with any degree of certainty. Before the adjournment the Convention issued the following directions (drawn up by O'Brien) for the impending mass meetings :—

"1. That peace, law, and order shall continue to be the motto of this Convention, so long as our oppressors shall act in the spirit of peace, law, and order towards the people ; but should our enemies substitute war for peace, or attempt to suppress our lawful and orderly agitation by lawless violence, we shall deem it to be the sacred duty of the people to meet force with force, and repel assassination by justifiable homicide. 2. That in accordance with the foregoing resolution, the Convention do employ only legal and peaceable means in the prosecution of the great and righteous objects of the present movement. Being also desirous that no handle should be afforded to the enemy for traducing our motives, or employing armed force against the people, we hereby recommend the Chartists, who may attend the approaching simultaneous meetings, to avoid carrying staves, pikes, pistols, or any other offensive weapons about their persons. We recommend them to proceed to the ground sober, orderly, and unarmed. As also to treat as enemies of the cause any person or persons who may exhibit such weapons, or who by any other act of folly or wickedness, should provoke a breach of the peace. 3. That the marshals and other officers who may have charge of the arrangements for the simultaneous meetings are particularly requested to use every means in their power to give effect to the recommendation embodied in the preceding resolution. We also recommend that the aforesaid officers do in all cases consult with the local authorities before the meetings take place. 4. That in case our oppressors in the middle and upper ranks should instigate the authorities to assail the people

with armed force, in contravention of the existing laws of the realm, the said oppressors in the upper and middle ranks shall be held responsible, in person and property, for any detriment that may result to the people from such atrocious instigation."

It was necessary to issue these directions, for every day witnessed a more and more widespread acquisition of pikes, old muskets, and other weapons of defence. William Benbow's pamphlet on the National Holiday as well as Francis Maceroni's book on street fighting reached a phenomenal sale.[1] From the beginning of May, 1839, the Chartists of the North of England who were in favour of physical force were convinced that the outbreak of the insurrection could not be deferred much longer.[2]

It was a fortunate circumstance for the British working classes that Lord John Russell appointed General Sir Charles J. Napier to be commander-in-chief of the troops in the North of England. Napier was a born leader of men, humane and enlightened, a lover of liberty, a hater of all plutocratic civilisation, sympathising to a certain degree with the political and social ideas of Chartism. He belonged to a family conspicuous in mental ability and nobility of character, which furnished the British nation with gifted generals, admirals, and writers on military subjects. The task was laid upon him to keep the Chartists in check. He was in sympathy with the people, and yet, in obedience to military discipline, he had undertaken the task of suppressing Chartism. In 1839 he wrote in his diary as follows :—

" As matters stand, I am for a strong police, but the people should have universal suffrage, the ballot, annual parliaments, farms for the people, and systematic education. I am opposed to landlordism and capitalism. . . . Manchester is the smokey chimney of the world. . . . If the path to hell is paved with

[1] Maceroni was an Italian colonel who lived in London as a refugee. In 1832 he wrote a pamphlet for the London workmen, entitled " Defensive Instructions for the People," which dealt specially with street fighting and the erection of barricades. A second edition appeared in 1834.

[2] Lloyd Jones, *Life of Robert Owen*, 1905 edition, p. 346.

good intentions, it is certainly laid out with Lancashire cotton goods. . . . The people must have rights to be able to protect themselves. Good government consists in having good laws well obeyed. England has an abundance of bad laws, but is every man to arm against every law he thinks bad? No! Bad laws must be reformed by the concentrated reason of the nation gradually acting on the legislature, not by pikes of individuals acting on the bodies of the executive."[1]

But the miseries of the people were heartrending. The suppression of Chartism must not lead to the triumph of militarism. However, the world does not stand still:—

"Truth is marching on, sadly shackled indeed, but the press will set her free, and the next hundred years will produce more change in the condition of men than the last thousand."[2]

Dominated by these ideas, Napier took over the command-in-chief of the North of England.

On May 16 the delegates separated. In the fourth week of May mass meetings were held at Newcastle, Sheffield, Monmouth, Bath, Liverpool, Hanley, Hull, Birmingham, Kersal Moor (near Manchester), Peep Green (near Huddersfield), Sunderland, Northampton, Preston, Glasgow and numerous smaller industrial towns. Everywhere they were well attended, if not in such masses as the Chartist papers asseverated. At most of these meetings several delegates of the Convention were generally present. The speeches were devoted to a clear exposition of the ulterior measures; but they also contained much violent rhetoric, partly expressing the revolutionary sentiments of the speakers, partly as a means of inflaming the masses and to gain their assent to the proposed measures. The meetings everywhere passed off without any disturbance of the peace. The meeting on Kersal Moor was attended also by General Napier and Colonel Wemyss, and they found nothing of a dangerous character in the speeches to which they listened. Both of the commanding officers were indeed supporters of the most complete freedom of speech, but they regarded the policy of physical

[1] W. Napier, *Life of Sir Charles J. Napier*, 1857, II., 63, 74, 75.
[2] *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 77 and 85.

force to be a delusion, since the physical force was wielded by the State and not by the poor people.

To all appearance the Chartists did not understand the reason for the restraint of the military. They were not acquainted with Napier and knew nothing of his mental struggles. They considered the restraint of the armed forces was due to their fear of the Chartists. As soon as the delegates returned to Birmingham on July 1, 1839, and the deliberations of the Convention were resumed, their revolutionary ardour came uppermost. In most cases there was no longer any question of regarding the situation as it really was. They reported on the large meetings at which the ulterior measures had been adopted with unanimity and enthusiasm. The numbers of the audiences were unconsciously greatly exaggerated, and they calculated the numbers of the men who were ready to fight by their estimates of those present at the meetings. Taylor and his special clique had raked up five old brass cannon from somewhere or other, and had buried them to be dug up again in case of need. They imagined that the English artillery which had not been in action since Waterloo would be useless. In addition there was the fact that a number of soldiers under Napier's command attended Chartist meetings and were adherents of Chartism. Under these circumstances how easy it was to give way to illusions and to consider them to be palpable facts! Napier was kept informed of these occurrences and invited a representative Chartist to inspect the English artillery and its prompt handling. He also formed up his battalions in Manchester, so as to bring back the revolutionary elements of the Lancashire working men to a true understanding of the actual position. On the advice of Lord John Russell, the soldiers who were adherents of Chartism were not punished, but, through discussion, were made to realise the folly of the policy of physical force.[1]

In the meantime the Convention was deliberating and Taylor declared :—

" The people have got muskets, but they require bayonets in order to be able to resist cavalry charges. I move that the Con-

[1] W. Napier, *Life of Sir Charles J. Napier*, pp. 62 *sqq.*

vention issue, without delay, a request to the country at large to withdraw all the moneys from all banks or from persons hostile to the People's Charter; to convert all paper money into gold; to abstain from all excisable articles of luxury; to commence exclusive dealings, prepare arms; and that the members of the Convention meet on July 15 for the express purpose of appointing a day when the sacred month or national holiday should commence."

O'Connor seconded the motion, and declared:—

"I strongly approve of the sacred month when the people might act the part of honourable plunderers instead of being arrant slaves."

Bussey was equally of the opinion that it was time to take serious action; his constituents were resolved immediately to carry the ulterior measures into effect. Dr. Fletcher gave expression to the same view, whilst M'Douall desired a stricter organisation after the manner of the United Irishmen. Burns supported M'Douall's proposal by saying: "Such an organisation is necessary. If the Government Peterlood the people, we should Moscow the country." [1]

When Napier heard of these resolutions he wrote:—

"The Chartists say they will keep the sacred month. Egregious folly! They will do no such thing; the poor cannot do it; they must plunder, and then they will be hanged by the hundreds; they will split upon it, but if they are made to attempt it they are lost. . . . Physical force! Fools! *We* have the physical force, not they. They talk of their hundred thousands of men. Who is to move them when I am dancing round them with cavalry and pelting them with cannon-shot? What would their 100,000 men do with my rockets wriggling their fiery tails among them, roaring, scorching, tearing, smashing all they come near? And when in desperation and despair they broke to fly, how would they bear five regiments of cavalry careering through them? Poor men! How little they know of physical force!" [2]

Education was what the workmen needed, said Napier, but

[1] *Charter*, July 7, 1839. [2] W. Napier, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

above everything they wanted bread. And he bestirred himself to bring influence to bear upon the magistrates to mitigate the severity of the Poor Law. He notes with pleasure that his officers felt a repugnance to fire upon fellow-citizens. The advocates of energetic measures were the magistrates, whose activity Napier had to be continually restraining. He had a poor opinion also of the Chartist leaders. He considered Taylor to be the leader of the physical force section.

In the meantime the magistrates of Birmingham, among whom were the ex-Chartists Muntz and Scholefield, took extensive precautions to keep the agitation in check. On May 16 they arrested two of the Chartist leaders, viz., Brown (a delegate) and Fussell. In the beginning of July they issued a proclamation forbidding workmen to meet in the evening in the Bull Ring. Since the town had no police force, the magistrates sent to London on July 4, for a hundred policemen, who marched to the Bull Ring between eight and nine o'clock, and used their truncheons on the crowd. At first the workmen took to flight, but in a few minutes they returned to make an attack. Their counter-attack was so violent that the police were scattered in all directions and sought refuge in houses. Three policemen were left severely wounded in the Bull Ring and two more remained in the hands of the workmen, who were determined to wreak their vengeance on them. But Taylor came quickly on the scene, and saved the life of the two policemen. Rioting lasted for some hours in Birmingham, until the delegates of the Convention succeeded in calming the people. Early in the morning of July 5 several Chartists, including Taylor, were arrested.

At nine o'clock the Convention met in order to discuss the events. Lovett immediately rose to speak and moved the following resolution :—

" 1. That this Convention is of opinion that a wanton, flagrant, and unjust outrage has been made upon the people of Birmingham by a blood-thirsty and unconstitutional force from London, acting under the authority of men who, when out of office, sanctioned and took part in the meetings of the people ; and now, when they share in the public plunder, seek to keep the people in social

and political degradation. 2. That the people of Birmingham are the best judges of their own right to meet in the Bull Ring or elsewhere; have their own feelings to consult respecting outrage given, and are the best judges of their own power and resources to obtain justice. 3. That the summary and despotic arrest of Taylor, our respected colleague, affords another convincing proof of all absence of justice in England, and clearly shows that there is no security for lives, liberty, or property till the people have some control over the laws they are called upon to obey."

The resolution was adopted unanimously; it was then printed and posted up all over the town. All the delegates were ready to subscribe their names to the poster, but Lovett warned the Convention to consider that the people ought not to be deprived of all its representatives at one blow; it would suffice if there were only one signature to the poster, and he would gladly make the sacrifice. He signed it alone and, accompanied by Collins, took it to the printer. By the afternoon it was printed and posted up. On the evening of July 6, Lovett and Collins were arrested and brought before the magistrate late at night.

It was only to be expected that Lovett's statements were frank and manly, and they immediately gained for him the magistrate's respect. He assumed entire responsibility for the resolutions, and for their publication by means of posters, and he declared that he stood by every word they contained.

Lovett, Collins, and Taylor were set at liberty on bail in the course of a few days.

At the same time Harney was arrested in Northumberland and brought to Birmingham. He had made inflammatory speeches on May 14, and had called upon the people to arm, to proclaim the sacred month, and to follow William Benbow's recipe for living at the expense of the landlords and capitalists. The charge against Harney was finally dropped, as well as the charge against Taylor. Only Lovett and Collins were brought before a jury at a later date.

In the meantime the streets of Birmingham were in the hands of the military and police; the shops were shut, and all

meetings were forbidden or dispersed by force. Martial law prevailed, where seven years ago the heart of the British Reform agitation had pulsated. In the course of the next few days the soldiers came twice into collision with the working men. The wrath of the people increased in intensity, until it gave vent to acts of violence on July 15. The houses and business premises of well-known enemies of Chartism were set on fire. Gold and silver goods were thrown into the street, but no working man picked them up ; no one plundered, no one considered his own interests. The rich took to flight, since they were unable to obtain protection from either the military or the police. Thereupon the workmen made full use of their right to meet in assembly, and since they were no longer interfered with, Birmingham again returned to its normal peaceful condition. Protest meetings were held by working men all over the country against the arbitrary action of the authorities in Birmingham. Whilst Sir Charles J. Napier agreed with the people, and ascribed the blame to the magistrates, the Iron Duke, when speaking in the House of Lords, bewailed the malicious and horrible acts " of the Birmingham mob, which has wrought more havoc than the cruellest enemies."

Already on July 8 the Convention had resolved to return to London, since the second reading of the Petition was to take place on July 12 in the House of Commons, and since the ulterior measures could be more successfully carried out from the capital. On the 10th, the delegates arrived in London.

5.—THE NATIONAL PETITION AND PARLIAMENT

The shadow of the fate of the Petition lay across all the debates of the Convention and all the meetings and resolutions of the Chartists. On June 14 Thomas Attwood introduced the Petition, and on July 12 there was a rather long discussion on the matter in the House of Commons. From an unprejudiced point of view, the National Petition was accorded a treatment incomparably more favourable than that shown to all the other petitions. The number of signatures, the comprehensive

character of the Petition, and the violence of the agitation throughout the whole country enforced a respect for it which even the most conservative member could not refuse to give it. But all this did not alter the fate of the Petition in the very slightest degree.

On June 14, 1839, the petition was introduced. Several vans had brought it along. Attwood then unrolled a portion and laid it on the table. The Petition was read a first time and was printed as a parliamentary paper.

On July 12 Attwood proposed the second reading of the Petition and supported it in a long speech. He took the oligarchy severely to task, depicted the miseries of the working classes, and ascribed all their wretchedness to the gold currency and the resumption of specie payment (1819). The Birmingham men were well aware that a parliament elected by universal suffrage would commit excesses in reform, but as the present parliament was extremely Conservative, excesses in reform would redress the balance. The Petition was signed by the *élite* of the British working class and should therefore not be disregarded. A sympathetic treatment of the Petition would also have a soothing effect upon the minds of the working men, and would put an end to the policy of physical force, of which he had always disapproved.

John Fielden supported the motion in a short speech, in which he pleaded for the greatest possible restriction of indirect taxation and for the introduction of a property-tax. The House seemed always to favour the rich and to neglect the wishes of the poor. The adoption of the Petition was a necessary step ; it was equally necessary that the rich should take a larger part in bearing the burden of the State. Justice alone could avert the impending social catastrophe.

Lord John Russell replied on behalf of the government in a rather long speech. He congratulated Attwood on his refusal to identify himself with those who had recommended the use of arms and physical force, who under the pretence of promoting the " so-called " National Petition had used the most violent and revolutionary language—not exceeded in violence and atro-

city in the worst times of the French Revolution—exhorting the people to subvert the laws by force of arms. The government were not opposed to the political views of the Petition and the Charter in favour of freedom, but to the menacing attitude of the Chartist leaders. The ministers could not conceive any form of political government or mode of legislation by which they could ensure to the whole community a perpetual state of prosperity, or by which, in a country, like Great Britain, depending very much upon commerce and manufactures, they could prevent that state of low wages and consequent distress which at all times affected those who were at the bottom of the scale, or prevent those alternate fluctuations from prosperity to distress which occur in every community of the kind. The United States of America already possessed all that the Petition demanded. Did that country never experience commercial crises, low wages, or want of employment? The state of things in England, as depicted by the Petition, was grossly exaggerated. Look at the savings banks. Did they not furnish pretty good proof of the number of artificers in this country who were not only receiving adequate wages, but also looking forward to the future support of their families? The member for Birmingham (Attwood) always held out only one cure for all our evils, viz., paper money. How did he know that a Parliament elected by Universal Suffrage would make use of this remedy? The leaders of the General Convention, Mr. Feargus O'Connor, Mr. Lovett, Mr. Collins, Mr. Frost, and many others declared themselves against any such currency.

In conclusion, Lord Russell warned the Convention and the Chartists in general against the employment of ulterior measures, which could but lead to disturbance, confusion, and injury of the interests of the working men, whom he exhorted to turn their backs upon Chartism.

The Radical members and free trade leaders, Villiers, Hume, and Wakley, spoke in favour of sending the Bill to a committee, but the Conservatives, including Benjamin Disraeli, were opposed to it. Disraeli's speech was the only one which exhibited serious thinking and original views: it bears evidence of a

thorough knowledge of the first phases of Chartism. For the first time in its history parliament heard the voice of Conservative social reform and Tory democracy. He believed the rise of Chartism to have been due to the Reform Bill, which had transferred the political power from a small but efficient minority of socially-minded aristocrats to a commercial class, which was centralising the State and handing over the social duties to a soulless bureaucracy, while the new rulers were enjoying the rights and privileges which power conferred upon them. Corporate activity and help, protection of the poor, administration of justice, and organisation of defence—duties which the aristocratic minority had performed—were being neglected or restricted or put into the hands of paid officials and commissioners. The sympathetic connection between ruling class and people was severed. No wonder that that people had come to the conclusion that they themselves must look after their own interests Hence the Charter : " The Chartists are in hostility against the middle classes. They made no attack on the aristocracy nor on the Corn Laws ; they attacked the new class, but not the old. I am aware that this discussion is distasteful to both of the great parties of the House. I regret it and am not ashamed to say, however, that while I disapprove of the Charter, I sympathise with the Chartists. They form a great body of our working men ; nobody can deny that they labour under great grievances. Look at the House ; it has been sitting now for five months. What has it done for the people ? Nothing, the government sees everything in the brightest colours ; everything is the best in the best of worlds. The government is busy making peers, creating baronets, at the very moment when a social insurrection is at our threshold. Out of the destruction of our old Constitution trouble and dishonour will grow up to this realm."[1]

Attwood replied at the conclusion of the debate with a brief reference to Lord Russell's statements about the savings banks' deposits :—" In the English savings banks the deposits amount altogether to 22 million pounds, but of these only two millions

[1] *Cp.* Disraeli, *Sybil*, book 5, chapter 1.

consisted of deposits of sums under £20, and these alone can be ascribed to workmen and operatives."

The House then divided with the following result: Ayes 46, Noes 235. The Petition was therefore rejected.[1] All the Radicals and free traders voted with Attwood, whilst Disraeli voted with the majority.

This was Attwood's last service to Chartism. The riotous events in Birmingham, the opposition of the Chartists to his views on currency reform, and the predominance of the physical force party induced Attwood to resign his seat in parliament and to withdraw from the political arena. In a valedictory address, dated December 9, 1839, he surveyed his public life, his efforts and his want of success. "Exhausted, disappointed, and ailing," he resolved to leave it to other and more skilful hands to carry out his ideas on currency.

6.—THE CONVENTION AND THE GENERAL STRIKE

On July 10, 1839, the delegates returned to London, and on July 13 they resumed their deliberations. Usually only half out of the 53 delegates were present. Seven were in prison and about 20 were engaged in agitation or in a conspiracy and paid little attention to the affairs of the Convention. The Petition was rejected by such a decisive majority that all hope had to be abandoned of any parliamentary success. On the other hand, the delegates had witnessed the way in which the working men of Birmingham had displayed their power, and on the very day that the Convention reassembled in London the news arrived from Newcastle that 25,000 miners had gone on strike as a protest against the arrest of Taylor, Lovett, Collins, and Harney. The delegates were alive to the significance of these events: the power of Chartism lay not in parliament, but in the people. The Convention therefore set to work to mobilise the masses, and made the general strike, or the sacred month, the order of the day. The discussions on these matters lasted for several weeks. Pursuant to a resolution of the Convention, the secretary of the

[1] Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates*, Third Series, vol. 49, pp. 220–274.

Convention requested the delegates who were engaged in agitation to return to London immediately, so as to take part in the discussions and resolutions on the general strike, but for some time this request remained unheeded. It was only at the conclusion of the debate that some of them appeared in order to bring the matter to a conclusion. It was generally felt, but not openly expressed, that the rejection of the Petition had exhausted the functions of the Convention. Why did not the Convention dissolve? The answer seems to be as follows: Either the delegates lacked courage to admit their defeat or else they considered it advisable for the Convention to prolong its existence so as to become a Directory of the People in case of an insurrection. The latter consideration must have prevailed with the majority of the delegates.

On July 13 the Convention opened the discussion on the general strike. It did not, however, produce any thorough and comprehensive discussion. There was indeed no lack of time or of able thinkers and speakers, for the Convention continued to sit until the middle of September, and the two or three dozen delegates who regularly attended the meetings belonged to the *élite* of the movement. Most of the delegates, however, shared the conviction that the general strike was merely the prelude to a general insurrection of the people, and that it would not be the stoppage of work, but civil war itself, that would cut the Gordian knot. Most of the delegates were conversant with Benbow's pamphlet, which stated that a week's provisions would suffice to initiate the social revolution. The people would then be masters of the situation and would make use of all the accumulated wealth according to the decrees of the insurrectionary committees. The delegates who expected the matter to be solved by street warfare considered it unnecessary to discuss the possibility of the general strike or even the preparations for its accomplishment. For them the main point was to put before the movement the dilemma of ruin or street warfare. They believed in the justice of the people's cause and in the inevitable victory of justice. Victory implied warfare, and the only thing to be done was to organise the campaign. What was the use, therefore, of indulging in specula-

tions on the general strike if this was merely to be the first move in the struggle? The delegates who held these opinions belonged to the most determined section of the Convention, and for a time carried the waverers along with them. O'Connor and his party belonged to the waverers. O'Brien was at first on the side of the advocates of a general strike and of street fighting, and subsequently opposed them. Lovett took no further part in this session of the Convention, for he was busy preparing for his trial, and was brought before the Assizes in August. Hetherington was ready for a general strike, but he was desirous of a clear and definite investigation of the situation. Most of the London men agreed with Hetherington as to the necessity for an exhaustive discussion of the nature and possibilities of the general strike, for they did not believe in street fighting.

About this time William Benbow suddenly appeared again on the scene. He was no longer in London, where his violent Radicalism found no response, but in Lancashire and Yorkshire, where he went about selling his pamphlet and holding meetings in the open air. We read that he spoke at Colne and Stockport, and exhorted the working men to lay out their money in procuring muskets and in preparing for the national holiday. On August 4, 1839, he was arrested, and on August 11 he was brought before the magistrates in Manchester.[1] It was only in April, 1840, that he appeared at the Assizes in Chester.

There can be no possible doubt that Benbow's pamphlet originated all the ideas of a general strike among the Chartists, and that the matter received no further thought. The following extracts from the *Charter* of July 21, 1839, give the gist of the debates and the final decision of the Convention on the subject.

On July 13, the day after the Petition had been rejected in parliament, the delegate Lowery moved the following resolution:

"The House of Commons, having refused to go into Committee on the prayer of the National Petition, it is vain to expect redress from the House; and it is therefore the opinion of the Convention that the people work no longer after the 12th of August next,

[1] *Charter*, August 18, 1839. Sir Charles J. Napier also mentions him in his diaries.

unless the power of voting for members of parliament, to enable them to protect their labour and their rights, is previously given or guaranteed to them."

After Lowery had moved his resolution, Moir (Scotland) declared that he would not vote upon the question, as he had received no instructions from his constituents, although he had requested them to inform him of their views; he must therefore consider that his work on the Convention had ceased. He added:—

"My personal opinion, however, is that the question before the Convention is one of the most important character. The sacred month is, in fact, nothing more nor less than the commencement of a revolution, the end of which no man can foresee. My opinion, therefore, is that before any such thing is recommended the organisation of the people should be carried out much more completely than it is now. It was not enough that some portion, some small portion, of the working classes should be willing to carry out the proposition for a national holiday; it must be adopted generally, if not universally, or evil and not good would be the result of it. I am of opinion that steps should be taken to get at least every large town to agree to act upon such a recommendation as that now asked for before such a recommendation can be given."

The delegates Neesom, Skevington, and Dr. Fletcher gave the assurance that Bury, Loughborough, Gloucester, Worcester, and Somerset were in favour of a general strike. The delegate of Rochdale opposed the resolution, saying:—

"The question we are discussing is most important. I must first ask, what is the meaning of the national holiday? Are we to abstain from all manner of work? If so, is the bread baked for a month? Is the corn ground for a month? I deny that is so. The people of Rochdale are of opinion that there is not food enough in South Lancashire to subsist the people for a fortnight. Failure in such a step would properly enough be looked upon as being a proof at once of folly and wickedness. It is of the utmost importance to consider not only the practicability, but also the consequences of such a measure as this. It had been

called a bloodless effort. Those who said so knew better. They know that it must lead to both blood and plunder. `I do not say I am against it, but I want to see beforehand what we are to gain by it, if even we are successful, and what we are to lose by it if unsuccessful. My mind is open to conviction, and although I am of opinion that a general strike is at once impracticable and foolish, the arguments to be brought forward may change my opinion."

Burns, who belonged to Taylor's conspiracy, declared :—

" It is no use now to cry ' Halt.' Whatever we may do now, we shall run great risks. The purpose of the national holiday is to show that if we ceased labour the government must cease to govern and the profitmongers to get their profit."

He was answered by William Carpenter as follows :—

" In proportion as I am impressed with a sense of the vast importance of this question is my embarrassment which I feel in addressing myself to it ; and I feel this the more, inasmuch as I know that every man who attempts to say or to do anything to repress the impetuosity of the more ardent spirits among us lays himself open to the imputation of timidity or cowardice, if not something much worse. A man's moral courage is much more seen in his daring to do right when he was liable to be vituperated and condemned, than blindly and heedlessly suffering himself to be carried along with the stream. We must discuss it then. But we have a right to expect that we should have a full convention, the day for the discussion having been fixed for some considerable time previously. We have about 30 members present out of 53. The absent delegates have been written to and urged, strongly urged, to be in their places. Where is O'Connor ? Where is O'Brien ? Craig, Dr. Taylor, and Frost ? . . . The fact is we have come to this subject without due preparation. All that has been said showed that we are alike ignorant of the probabilities of the order for the sacred month being obeyed and of the way in which the holiday should be turned to great account, even did the people obey and leave their work. Under these circumstances it would be a crime to do anything to bring about this crisis. It is true that the men

of Newcastle and its neighbourhood are ready to obey the Convention, and if they were only a sample of the people generally I should not hesitate to vote for the holiday. But this is not the case, and I would rather submit to misrepresentation than order a measure which would inevitably lead to the sacrifice of these brave fellows. Friends, we are deceiving ourselves. Glasgow is not ready, Ashton is not ready, Manchester has given no definite answer, nor has Sheffield. Are we going to let loose hundreds of thousands of desperate and hungry men upon society without having any specific object in view or any plan of action laid down, but trusting to a chapter of accidents as to what the consequences should be ? Is this a course worthy of a deliberate assembly ? I have made up my mind. I shall oppose fixing a day for the holiday until we have better evidence, first as to the practicability of the thing, or the probability of its being carried into effect ; and next as to the way in which it is to be employed."[1]

In spite of the speeches against the general strike Lowery's resolution was carried on July 16. The opposition to it, however, had not been in vain. It brought Taylor, O'Connor, and O'Brien to London ; a committee was formed of seven members with the object of discussing the most efficacious means by which a general strike could be carried into effect. The Convention at the same time held a secret consultation, which resolved to issue a manifesto on the general strike. M'Douall was desirous above all for the trade unions to be requested to co-operate with them in carrying out the ulterior measures. The Convention was no longer so firmly convinced of the wisdom of the resolution of July 16, and sought for a means of escape from a difficult situation.

This was discovered by O'Brien. On July 22, he made the following speech :—

" My absence from the Convention was excused by the circumstance that I was agitating in the North of England and Lancashire. The people are well up to the mark, but I fear they are not ready yet for a general strike. I strongly urge the Convention

[1] *Charter*, July 21, 1839.

not to precipitate matters. I should like to see great masses of the population keeping the holiday, but this could not be the case if it were fixed for August 12. At all events we ought to enquire into the facts and place them fearlessly before the people. I move the following resolution :—

" ' The Convention continues to be unanimously of opinion that nothing short of a general strike, or suspension of labour throughout the country, will ever suffice to establish the rights and liberties ; we nevertheless cannot take upon ourselves the responsibility of dictating the time or circumstances of such a strike, believing that we are incompetent to do so for the following reasons :—

" ' (1) Because our numbers have been greatly reduced by the desertion, absence, or arbitrary arrest of a large proportion of our number. (2) Because great diversity of opinion prevails amongst the remaining members as to the practicability of a general strike in the present state of trade in the manufacturing districts. (3) Because a similar diversity of opinion seems to prevail out of doors amongst our constituents and the working class generally. (4) Because under these circumstances it is more than doubtful whether an order from the Convention for a general holiday would be generally obeyed : in other words, whether a strike would not prove a failure. (5) Because, while we firmly believe a universal strike would prove the salvation of the country, we are at the same time equally convinced that a partial strike would only entail the bitterest privations and sufferings in all who took part in it, and in the present exasperated state of public feeling would not improbably lead to convulsion and anarchy. (6) Because, though it is the duty of the Convention to participate in all the people's dangers, it is no part of our duty to create dangers unnecessarily. (7) Because we believe that the working men themselves are the only fit judges of their right and readiness to strike work when they will, as also of their own resources and capabilities of meeting the exigencies which such an event would entail.

" ' Under these circumstances we decide that a committee of ten be appointed to reconsider the vote of the 16th inst. and to

substitute an address, which shall leave to the people themselves to decide whether they will or will not commence the sacred month on the 12th of August next, at the same time explaining the reasons for adopting such a course and pledging the Convention to co-operate with the people in whatever measures they may then deem necessary to their safety and emancipation.' "

After a long discussion, O'Brien's resolution was adopted by a majority of six votes.[1]

The great majority of the delegates left London and returned to their constituencies. A central council of seven members was chosen to administer the affairs of the Convention. The ten members of the general strike committee also remained in London to receive the special reports from the provinces. The following declaration, based on these reports, was published by the committee on August 6 :—

" We are unanimously of opinion that the people are not prepared to carry out the sacred month on the 12th of August, 1839. The same evidence, however, convinces us that the great body of the working people, including those of most of the trades, may be induced to cease work on the 12th inst. for one, two or three days, in order to devote that time to meetings and processions, for deliberating on the present awful state of the country, and devising the best means of averting the hideous despotism with which the industrious orders are menaced by the murderous majority of the upper and middle classes, who prey on their labour. We, at the same time, beg to announce to the country that it is the deliberate opinion of this council that unless the trades of Great Britain shall co-operate as united bodies with their more distressed brethren in making a grand moral demonstration on the 12th inst., it will be impossible to save the country from a revolution of blood, which after enormous sacrifice of life and property will terminate in the utter subjection of the working people to the moneyed murderers of society. Under these circumstances we implore all our brother Chartists to abandon the project of a sacred month, as being for the present utterly impracticable, and to prepare themselves

[1] *Charter*, July 28, 1839.

forthwith to carry into effect the aforesaid constitutional objects on the 12th inst. We also implore the united trades, if they would save the country from convulsion and themselves from ruin, to render their distressed brethren all the aid in their power, on or before the 12th inst., towards realising the great and beneficent object of the holiday. Men of the trades! The salvation of the country is in your hands!" [1]

The manifesto reveals a feeling of despair. The discussions on the ulterior measures had alarmed the tradesmen, small shopkeepers, and manufacturers. The threats of the working men to make their purchases exclusively from Chartists and to undertake a general strike induced the shopkeepers and employers to apply to Lord John Russell for protection. On July 31, 1839, the latter issued directions to the magistrates to take energetic steps against any attempt to carry out the ulterior measures, to arrest all persons agitating for these measures, and to prosecute them, since the ulterior measures were "illegal and subversive of the peace." The arrests began in April and became more frequent: in August alone there were 130 Chartist leaders arrested.[2] Some of the delegates to the Convention were convicted, others were committed for trial and released on bail, viz., Vincent, Lovett, Collins, Brown, O'Connor, M'Douall, Taylor, Richardson, O'Brien, Carrier, Neesom, and Deegan.

It is also obvious from the manifesto that the trade unions were not inclined to enter blindly on a strike. Some members of the Convention had tried to induce them to form a secret organisation; this can be inferred from a reference made by O'Brien in 1840 and 1842, without, however, giving any details.[3] The trade unions declined to entertain the suggestion.

For the time being the manifesto put an end to Benbow's plan, and the working men kept a holiday on August 12, and followed the advice of the Convention in holding large meetings and processions in almost all the manufacturing towns, causing

[1] *Charter*, August 11, 1839.
[2] *Accounts and Papers*, year 1840 (600), vol. 38, pp. 691 and *sqq.*
[3] *British Statesman*, November 5, 1842; *Southern Star*, January 26, 1840.

some disturbance of the peace in several localities. Delegates of the Convention visited most of the meetings and remained in the country until August 25. O'Connor went, at the instance of the Convention, to Glasgow, where a conference of 57 Scotch delegates was held. Their reports were opposed for the greater part to a general strike; the minority were in favour of arming, but the majority supported the policy of moral force.

On August 26 the Convention reassembled in London, but its functions were at an end. The Petition was dead, the general strike was abandoned, the lack of systematic organisation could no longer be denied, and there was no cessation of arrests and convictions. The failure of the Convention sowed dissension among the delegates, so that the public meetings of the Convention cast no credit upon anyone. On September 6 O'Brien moved in favour of dissolving the Convention. The motion was seconded by Taylor, and passed by 12 votes to 11. On September 14 the Convention finally dissolved. A few of the delegates, such as Carpenter and O'Brien, returned to journalism, O'Connor to agitation, Taylor, Frost, Burns, Cardo, and Bussey to conspiracy, and the tragic sequel of their activity will be dealt with in a later chapter.

One of the last acts of the Convention was the drafting of a "Declaration of the Constitutional Rights of Britons." In the course of the discussions on universal suffrage, annual parliaments, drilling and bearing of arms, meetings and assemblies, the Convention became aware of the fact that the constitutional rights of British citizens were undefined, and therefore liable to unfavourable legal interpretation. It resolved therefore to take the opinion of a constitutional lawyer. A German jurist, Schröder by name,[1] who had left his native country to find a new home in London, wrote his opinion in the form of a Declaration of Rights. He divided it into 39 articles —probably in imitation of the 39 Articles of Faith of the Church of England—set out the Chartist claims in paragraphs, and to each article he appended legal references, indicating a most exceptional degree of knowledge of English constitutional

[1] *Charter*, September 1, 1839.

literature. All the important statutes, charters, old codes and chronicles were utilised ; all precedents referring to these points, legal judgments and opinions of the great English lawyers and statesmen of the Middle Ages and recent times were pressed into the service of the Chartists.

The delegates were so delighted with the Declaration that they regarded it as the most important result of the Convention. They realised that their actions had not been founded on any solid basis, and that now they possessed a programme and a justification. The Declaration was closely studied by the leaders, agitators, and speakers of the Chartist movement. Ordinary workmen read the old statutes and the works of the great English lawyers, so far as they were available in English or in English translations. In the political trials of March and April, 1840, the accused quoted from these sources in order to demonstrate the legal and constitutional character of the Chartist agitation.[1]

[1] *Northern Star*, March and April, 1840.

V

CHARTIST REVOLT AND THE NATIONAL CONSCIENCE

I.—THE INSURRECTION IN SOUTH WALES

DURING the agitation of the Chartists and their volunteers in 1836, 1837, and 1838, the Whig government adopted a passive attitude. Neither the violent speeches delivered by Stephens, Taylor, Beaumont, and O'Connor nor the increasing number of Chartist advocates of physical force caused the government any anxiety. It was only the local authorities and the Conservative newspapers that were rather excited about it; the former from the fear that the violent speeches might lead to breaches of the peace; the latter from the motive of party policy, in order to discredit the Whigs throughout the country. Finally, in the autumn of 1838, the government was forced to take up a new attitude towards the agitation. On October 8, 1838, Lord John Russell, at a banquet given in his honour at Liverpool, delivered a speech on the general state of affairs and on the services rendered by the Reform Parliament, and he seized this opportunity to express his opinion on the Chartist agitation :—

"Public life pulsates strongly at present and is expressed by the numerous public meetings which are now in the course of being held in various parts of the country. There are some, perhaps, who would put down such opinions; but such is not my opinion, nor that of the government with which I act. I think the people have a right to meet. If they had no grievances, common sense would speedily come to the rescue and put an end to those meetings. It is not from free discussion, it is not from the unchecked declaration of public opinion that governments have anything to fear. There was fear when men were driven by force to secret combinations. There was the fear, there was the danger, and not in free discussion."

This was the government's policy. Lord John Russell's attitude towards the Chartists was exceedingly humane; it was dictated by the sincere desire of avoiding bloodshed. Sir Charles Napier, who was in close communication with him, expressed the same opinion. But the increasing alarm of the local authorities, the growing violence of the Chartist leaders in the North of England, the bitter opposition of the Conservative press, which regarded the Reform Bill as the prelude of Chartism, as well as the fluctuating and diminishing majority of the Whigs in parliament, forced the government to adopt measures of suppression.[1] On December 27, 1838, Stephens was arrested in Manchester and indicted for incitement to riot. He was indeed released on bail, but the excitement of the people in Lancashire, Yorkshire, and the whole of the North of England steadily increased. What Stephens was to the North of England Vincent was to Wales and the West of England. After some riotous scenes in Devizes and Llanidloes, Vincent was arrested on May 8, 1839. In July, August, and September the arrests were so numerous that all the Chartist leaders of any importance were either in prison or awaiting trial. But these prosecutions nowhere excited such bitterness of feeling as in Wales.

The simple, emotional, and enthusiastic nature of the Welsh working men was, and still is, averse from dilatory tactics and parliamentary methods; it expects sensational deeds in any popular agitation. Their temperament resembles that of the French proletariate, but it is nourished and stimulated by primitive Christian feelings rather than by logical inferences. The Welsh received the message of Chartism from the eloquent enthusiast, Henry Vincent, and regarded it as the embodiment of justice, liberty, and fraternity, for which their heart had been craving. For their material condition was much better than that of most of the English workmen. The industrial revolution was still scarcely known in Wales. The actual proletariat consisted of coal miners and iron workers, who received relatively good wages. Amicable, patriarchal relations regulated the

[1] A summary of the Conservative onslaughts on the government is given in the *Quarterly Review*, vol. 65, p. 290-314, 485.

questions of work and wages, whilst rich and poor met together in the chapels, united by religious interests in common against the Established Church. Chartism in Wales was a moral rather than an economic movement. Its most important leader was John Frost, a draper in Newport, who exerted an authoritative influence on his comrades by reason of his position and personality. Since 1817 he devoted himself to the furtherance of Radical doctrines, and in 1822 he brought upon himself a term of imprisonment of six months. After the victory of the Reform Bill and the introduction of new municipal government his fellow-citizens elected him to the town council, and then he was successively appointed, mayor, magistrate, and justice of the peace. When Vincent brought Chartism to Newport in 1838, Frost was justice of the peace. Nevertheless, he immediately expressed his sympathy with the new movement, and allowed himself to be elected a delegate to the Convention by the Chartists. When the Convention assembled in London, Frost was denounced by the Conservative press, and Lord John Russell in consequence suggested to him the advisability of resigning the honourable position of justice of the peace. Frost did so under protest, for he regarded Lord John Russell's demand as a violation of freedom of thought. The protest was published in the Chartist press and made its author one of the most popular men of the movement. Frost took no leading part in the public deliberations of the Convention, but he must have rendered great service in committee meetings. Smarting under this treatment by the government, and impelled by his own enthusiastic temperament, he joined Taylor, and finally took part in his conspiracy for using physical force.

Here we enter on a chapter of the history of Chartism which is still to some extent wrapped in obscurity. All that is known about it is derived from sources which are contaminated by polemical passion.[1]

[1] *Northern Star*, May 3, 1845; Gammage, *History of Chartist Movement*, p. 262 and *sqq.*; William Lovett, *Life*, p. 238 and *sqq.*; *Diplomatic Review*, January 1872, p. 23; Thomas Frost, *Forty Years' Recollections*, 1880, p. 109 & 297 (Thomas Frost was neither related to nor acquainted with John Frost).

The following germ of truth may be extracted from all these accounts. When the Petition had been rejected and the peaceful policy of moral suasion had missed fire, the delegates, Taylor, Frost, Cardo, Bussey, Burns, and perhaps also Lowery, met in secret conclave and resolved to emancipate the working class by means of an insurrection. They considered Yorkshire, Lancashire, Birmingham, Sheffield, and Wales to be ripe or suitable for insurrection. The Pole, Major Beniowski, was sent down to Wales as military instructor, and old retired non-commissioned officers were appointed in some of the towns in the North of England and the Midlands for the purpose of drilling the workmen. It appears from Sir Charles Napier's diaries that most of these non-commissioned officers kept up relations with the military authorities and furnished them with information as to the preparations. The secret conspiracy was organised on the model of the United Irishmen, and the country covered by the Chartist agitation was divided into districts, in which the Chartists were classed in groups of 10, 100 and 1000 men with special leaders and captains. When Cardo was arrested in November, 1839, some of the plans of the organisation were discovered.[1]

In the meantime the Welsh became restive and urged that the time for action had arrived. The harsh sentences of imprisonment which had been passed upon the accused at Llanidloes, the prohibition of the right of assembly, and the confiscation of weapons, and finally Vincent's bad treatment at the hands of the prison authorities, roused Wales to a high pitch of bitter feeling. The working men and operatives were determined above all to set Vincent free by the use of force. Frost was no longer able to curb the people, and was obliged to put himself at their head. On the eve of the dissolution of the Convention he explained the situation in Wales to his more intimate friends, and declared that Chartism was compromised in that part of the country unless something was done without delay. But Wales could not take isolated action ; the North of England and the Midlands must also join in the insurrection at the same time.

[1] *Charter*, November 24, 1839.

Thereupon Bussey, the Bradford delegate, replied that he would stand by the Welsh and would rouse Yorkshire to insurrection. Frost returned home to set about the work, whilst Bussey did nothing and had no intention of doing anything. William Ashton, a local and influential labour leader in Yorkshire, who had been informed of the projected insurrection and who knew Bussey to be a braggart, foresaw the impending catastrophe and communicated with Hill, the editor of the *Northern Star*, to the effect that the Welsh were preparing an insurrection and were reckoning upon the assistance of Bussey, who would, however, leave them in the lurch. He requested Hill to acquaint O'Connor of the circumstance without delay, for O'Connor was the only man in a position to restrain the Welsh from their ill-fated intentions. Hill, as he asserted subsequently, carried out Ashton's request without delay and communicated the secret to O'Connor. O'Brien, too, learned of the course of events in Wales, and shared the same opinion that O'Connor would have to intervene immediately in order to avert misfortune from the Welsh. According to the account given by Hill and O'Brien in 1845, O'Connor took no steps towards rescuing the Welsh from their fate, and calmly went away to Ireland at the end of October; nothing was heard of him until the Welsh insurrection had miscarried and its leaders were imprisoned. On the other hand, O'Connor asserted that neither Hill nor O'Brien had informed him of the secret conspiracy of the Welsh. It was in ignorance of the state of affairs that he left for Ireland, where he had business to attend to. O'Connor's account deserves more credence than that given by Hill and O'Brien. Whatever may be thought of O'Connor, he was certainly neither a coward nor a traitor.

This insurrection took the following course.

Towards the end of October, Frost, William Jones, a journeyman watchmaker, and Zephaniah Williams, an innkeeper, came to an agreement to march upon Newport with about a thousand men on the night of November 3, and to release Vincent from prison. The Chartists were mobilised and divided into three columns. A number of them were armed with old muskets,

others with pikes and a number with clubs. They marched and sang :

" I have seen the poplars flourish fast,
While the humble briars bound them ;
I have seen them torn up by the blast
Of elements around them.

The lightning flashing through the sky,
The thunder loud roars after,
O scorch, burn the oppressors ! Why ?
Because they withhold the Charter.

Then rise, my boys, and fight the foe,
Your arms are truth and reason.
We'll let the Whigs and Tories know
That union is not treason.

Ye lords, oppose us if you can,
Your own doom you seek after ;
With or without you we will stand
Until we gain the Charter."

On November 3 the columns converged upon Newport, but owing to the fact that the local circumstances were unfavourable, it was only early on November 4 that the insurgents entered the town. The authorities had been well informed of this movement and kept in readiness a force of police, special constables, and 35 men of the 45th Infantry Regiment. When the Chartists appeared in Newport, the policemen and special constables offered some resistance and then took to flight, running to Westgate Hotel, where the soldiers, under the command of a lieutenant, had taken up their positions at the windows and stood to arms. To all appearance Frost and his colleagues had no knowledge of the presence of soldiers, and only knew that the magistrate was in the hotel. The Chartist leaders marched up with their men to the hotel and demanded the liberation of the prisoners. Suddenly there was a rattle of musketry, and in the space of twenty minutes ten Chartists lay dead and about fifty wounded in the square in front of the Westgate Hotel. The rest took to flight. The insurrection was at an end. Among the

dead Chartists there was a youth, only eighteen years old, George Shell by name, who had sent the following letter to his parents on the eve of the fight :

Pontypool, Sunday Night, Nov. 3, 1839.

Dear Parents,

I hope this will find you well, as I am myself at this present. I shall this night be engaged in a glorious struggle for freedom, and should it please God to spare my life I shall see you soon ; but if not, grieve not for me, I shall have fallen in a noble cause. Farewell !

Yours truly,

GEORGE SHELL.

Numerous arrests followed the suppression of the insurrection. Those arrested included Frost, Williams, Jones, and four other Chartists, who were indicted for high treason. The government sent a special commission of judges to Monmouth, where the trials began on December 31, 1839, and closed on January 13, 1840. Frost, Williams, and Jones were sentenced to death. The death sentence was also passed upon the other four Chartists, but with the intention of its being commuted to transportation for life. Owing to a technical error and still more probably owing to the great excitement of the people of Great Britain over the conviction of the three Welsh leaders, even the latter were reprieved and the sentences commuted to transportation for life. In 1856 they were granted a complete amnesty.

2.—WHOLESALE ARRESTS

From April, 1839, to June, 1840, 380 Chartist leaders in England and 62 in Wales were either arrested and acquitted or else condemned to terms of imprisonment, varying from three months to transportation for life ; 425 out of the 442 arrested persons belonged to the working class : textile operatives, metal workers, and miners formed the main contingent ; the remaining 17 belonged to the intellectual section and tradesmen.

On August 3, 1839, four of the men who had taken a leading part in the Birmingham riots of July 15 stood for trial at the

assizes at Warwick. Three of them were condemned to death, but their sentences were subsequently commuted to transportation for life. On August 6 and 7 Collins and Lovett stood before the same jury as accused persons. Collins was defended by a lawyer, but Lovett conducted his own defence, which evoked the admiration of the public prosecutor and of the judge The main points of the indictment included the authorship and publication of the resolutions of July 5, in which the London police and the local authorities at Birmingham had been censured in the strongest possible terms.

Lovett did not withdraw a single word of these resolutions, and pointed out that the people had a right of assembly and free discussion. The accused men were sentenced each to a year's imprisonment, where they were treated as common criminals. On August 10 a number of Chartists and persons connected with Chartism stood their trial at the assizes at Chester. J. R. Stephens and M'Douall were among the accused. Stephens's speech in his defence lasted for five hours, but there was nothing Chartist about it. Stephens disavowed all connection with Chartism; he denied that he had ever spoken in favour of universal suffrage, and he developed a conservative social programme after the manner of Disraeli and Oastler, to which he was ready to devote his whole life. His *volte face* was, however, of little avail; he was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment, but he was well treated by the prison authorities, in striking contrast to Lovett and Collins. Stephens's apostasy roused resentment in Chartist circles. He was accused of treachery, but O'Connor ascribed his change of opinion to the calumnies which O'Brien had disseminated some months previously about Stephens, and in this way had made him an object of suspicion to the people.

M'Douall was accused of incitement to procure arms and of encouraging fighting in the streets. The speech he made in his defence lasted also for five hours, and was practically an exposition of the principles of Chartism.

Many of the great trials for high treason took place in March and April, 1840. O'Connor was sentenced to 18 months' im-

prisonment for conspiring against the State; Bronterre O'Brien received the same sentence [1]; Benbow received 16 months; his speech in his defence took over ten hours to deliver. He compared himself with Jesus, the Whigs with the Jews, and the judge with Pontius Pilate.[2] Holberry, a spirit distiller, who was only 25 years old, had, in his romantic, revolutionary ardour, set himself the task of leading the Chartists against Napier and seizing Nottingham; he received four years' imprisonment. Two years later he died in his cell, and was buried at Sheffield after an imposing funeral, in which 20,000 working men took part; Harney delivered the funeral oration.

The speeches for the defence relied for the most part upon the law of nature, but in some cases speeches were made by ordinary workmen, which were devoid of all legal and pseudo-historical erudition, and gave most affecting descriptions of the distress among the working class. One of the accused, George Lloyd, a joiner, stood before the jury at Liverpool, and depicted such a harrowing scene of the sufferings and persecutions of the Chartist working men that the audience were moved to tears.

The wholesale arrests made great demands on the spirit of sacrifice of the Chartist and Labour movement. Money was collected for the families of the prisoners and a special maintenance fund was started. In spite of all this, the contributions were barely sufficient to alleviate the misery of the families involved. O'Connor devoted a part of the profits of the *Northern Star* to the support of the arrested men. The local organisations did much for their arrested leaders, and enabled them to obtain

[1] One of the witnesses against O'Brien was a shorthand writer, who was employed as a reporter of the *Manchester Guardian*. In his depositions he stated that O'Brien in his speech at Manchester on property divided land into three kinds of value: (1) original value; (2) improved value (by cultivation); (3) improvable value by future improvements. This evidence of the stenographer is interesting. It is, word for word, the same division of values which is given by Ogilvie and which formed the central point of his land reform. *Cp. Northern Star*, April 11, 1840, p. 7, col. 1, and Ogilvie, *Essay*, 1782, pp. 20–4.

[2] *Northern Star*, April 18 and 25, 1840.

better food in prison. The families of the more prominent leaders received a pound a week.[1]

Immediately after the tragic end of the insurrection in South Wales, Taylor withdrew from the agitation and died in a short space of time. Bussey was covered with ignominy and left home for America.

Further, the Chartist press suffered from the persecutions. In the year 1839–40 the following papers ceased publication : *True Scotsman, Operative, Charter, Champion, Southern Star, Western Vindicator,* and *Northern Liberator.* Their place was taken by the weeklies, *Scottish Chartist Circular* and *English Chartist Circular.* The latter appeared in London and existed until the end of 1843 ; it was well edited and contained a great store of materials for the history of the working classes and the revolutionary movements in Great Britain and Ireland ; it was also a supporter of the cause of temperance. In 1842 the weekly, the *British Statesman,* appeared in London, and was brilliantly edited by O'Brien in the latter half of the year.

The *Northern Liberator* (Newcastle), during the last months of its career, was, in addition, the organ of Lord Palmerston's opponents. The leaders of the anti-Palmerston agitation were David Urquhart and Charles Attwood (brother of Thomas Attwood).

3.—FIRST EFFECTS OF CHARTISM ON LITERATURE

" Delirious Chartism," wrote Thomas Carlyle at the end of 1839, " will not have raged to no purpose . . . if it have forced the thinking men of the community to think of this vital question."[2] The Charter, with its six points, the National Petition, with its five points, borne aloft on pikeheads and rendered glaringly visible to the people by the flaming torchlights of the nocturnal meetings, could not fail to force upon the national conscience the condition-of-England question The stirring events of 1837, 1838, and 1839 impressed, before all, the

[1] *Northern Star,* April 11, 1840.
[2] Thomas Carlyle, *Chartism,* 1839, chapter 1.

imagination of writers and poets; they ushered in a literary period distinguished by social reform novels, social economic pamphlets, and revolutionary poetry. This literary movement gained in strength and volume after the general strike in the North of England in the autumn, 1842, but its origin coincides with the upheaval of Labour in the years from 1833 to 1840.

The *Northern Star* gave, in 1837, long extracts from Dickens's *Oliver Twist*. In 1839, Mrs. Trollope went to Manchester for the purpose of investigating the real conditions of the factory population. The result of her studies was the novel *Michael Armstrong*. In 1841, Charlotte Elizabeth (Phelan) Tonna published *Helen Fleetwood*, depicting " the vile, the cruel, the body and soul murdering system of factory labour . . . the prolific source of every ill that can unhumanise man." But, while she also denounces Socialism as the " moral Gorgon " and " the last effort of satanic venom," she pleads, with much force and great sympathy, the cause of Labour, and exhorts the Church to work for the welfare of the poor. However, the most important writer of the period we are dealing with was Capel Lofft, jun., who, in 1839, published a revolutionary epic, *Ernest, or Political Regeneration*. It is the fanfare of Chartism. It represents the growth, the heroic struggles, the triumph of the Socialist and political Labour movement. Dean Milman, in a long essay, regards it as the work of a dangerous genius, a poet of extraordinary powers, whom he " entreats, exhorts, and implores to consult his fame, his happiness, his life, his eternal interests," and turn his gifts to more patriotic uses.[1] The book had, however, by that time been withdrawn from circulation. *Ernest* deals with the story of a peasants' revolt in Germany, but the conditions and the atmosphere in the midst of which the revolt is fought out are English. It is a struggle against rapacious and oppressing landowners, for universal suffrage, democracy, nationalisation of the land, and religious freedom or primitive Christianity. The spiritual leader of the revolt is a schoolmaster and Nonconformist preacher, who—

[1] *Quarterly Review*, vol. 65, p. 153 *sqq*.

"... lit his torch from heaven, and with that torch
Kindled all hearts—the poor look gladly on high;
Having scant comfort here. ...
... Faith, the gospel, and love
These three he preached, leaving the mysteries
Devised by man, for God's simplicity,
And viewing the earth one commonwealth
Level as is the ocean—so his word
Waxed and took wings and flew forth wondrously."

(*Ernest*, pp. 27–8.)

Then the young agitator gradually unfolds his system of regeneration:—

"They who have toiled the ground, 'tis theirs of right
To share it, and enjoy it, and thank God;
Sharing by rule of elders, duly ordained
To make apportionment of labourers
And judge all controversies of each farm.
But for the landlord—'tis an impious name,
By man usurped from God—so be it resolved,
To make no further mention of his name,
But let the State take their dominion,
Paying them compensation lest they starve."

(*Ibid.*, p. 146.)

Next in importance to land nationalisation is universal education, which should combine labour and art with letters, in order to enable the people to govern themselves and supply their needs by labouring and sharing in common.

Thomas Carlyle's *Chartism*, though it exhibits little knowledge of the essence of its subject, directed the attention of the nation to the discontent of the working classes. Its commonplace thoughts, clothed in super-Coleridgean phraseology, gave to it an air both of familiarity and profundity, and could, therefore, not fail to render it popular with educated newspaper readers.

Chartism had entered literature. It began to interest the thinking part of the population, yet very few intellectuals joined it. The gaps made in the ranks of the leaders by prosecution and imprisonment were not filled up. The Chartist movement subsequent to 1839 was poorer in capable thinkers than ever before. There was indeed no lack of young men who could

deliver enthusiastic speeches on the rights of men, the corruption of government, and the merciless exploitation of labour, but no object would be gained by giving their names and biographies. Like bubbles they skimmed over the sea of Chartism, glittered for a time in its colours and burst unnoticed, to make place for others. But Chartism suffered severely for want of independent and inquiring minds. Yet the working men were eager to learn, attended mechanics' institutes, studied science, maintained halls for meetings, and spared no pains to educate themselves and to acquire knowledge. In the industrial towns "you would see working men in groups discussing the great doctrine of political justice—that every grown-up, sane man ought to have a vote in the election of the men who were to make the laws by which he was to be governed; or they were in earnest dispute respecting the teachings of Socialism." [1]

These words are more suitable of application to the years 1840 and 1842 than to any other period in the history of Chartism. At that time the expressions Chartist, Socialist, trade unionist, and working man were synonymous terms. In 1842 the standard of Chartism was actually the standard of the organised working men. Nevertheless, the movement comprised few intellectual adherents. The persecutions of 1839 and 1840 had driven many of the thinking workers away to North America, where they disseminated Ogilvie's and Spence's ideas of agrarian reform which they had acquired through Bronterre O'Brien. Many of them were repelled by O'Connor's methods of agitation and returned to local spheres of activity, others again joined the Anti-Corn Law League.

Among the Chartist leaders who joined the movement in the period from 1840 to 1842 only Thomas Cooper (1805-1892), the prototype of Kingsley's *Alton Locke*, deserves mention. Of all self-taught Chartists he was, next to Lovett, the most cultured and spiritual writer. By his indomitable will the young shoemaker learned Latin, Greek, French, Italian, Hebrew, and wrote good English prose and poetry, though he never emancipated himself from the literary influences of Carlyle and Shelley. His

[1] Thomas Cooper, *Life*, ed. 1897, p. 393.

remarkable literary and oratorical gifts soon procured him the leadership for Leicester and the surrounding district. At first he sided with O'Connor, but from 1845 he became his opponent, in both cases with great vehemence, for Cooper had a contempt for half-measures. As an adherent of O'Connor, he brooked no opposition to him—as his enemy he had not got a single good word for him. He played a considerable part in the upheaval of 1842, and was sentenced to two years' imprisonment. His *Purgatory of Suicides*, which he dedicated to Thomas Carlyle, was written in prison. From 1845 onwards Cooper was for the absolute abandonment of physical force. He was mainly a literary man and a poet, and had only a slight knowledge of politics and political economy; his socialism was hopelessly Utopian.

The following stanzas are taken from one of his best poems :—

Truth is growing—hearts are glowing
With the flame of Liberty :
Light is breaking—thrones are quaking,
Hark ! the trumpet of the Free !

Long, in lowly whispers breathing,
Freedom wandered drearily—
Still, in faith, her laurel wreathing
For the day when there should be
Freemen shouting—Victory !

Now, she seeketh him that speaketh
Fearlessly of lawless might ;
And she speedeth him that leadeth
Brethren on to win the Right.

VI

REORGANISATION AND ELECTORAL POLICY

I.—THE NATIONAL CHARTER ASSOCIATION (N.C.A.)

THE experience of the early years of Chartism impressed the leaders with the conviction that the loosely-knit local organisations were not favourable to unity of action. Organisation became a burning question and occupied the attention of all thoughtful Chartists. About the middle of the year 1840 the Chartist leaders entered into active correspondence on this subject—even the leaders who were in prison were able to correspond, or else found means to communicate their views to their comrades—and on July 20, 1840, 23 delegates from the Midlands and the North of England met in conference at Manchester, in order to devise a plan of organisation. The conference considered plans of organisation drawn up by Feargus O'Connor, O'Brien, Burns, M'Douall and Benbow. O'Connor was mainly in favour of strengthening the Chartist press by turning the *Northern Star* into a daily morning paper: "A Morning Star," he wrote, "will be specially devoted to producing a complete change in the circumstances of the working class by inducing it to return to agriculture." [1]

O'Brien's plan hinged upon the formation of electoral associations. M'Douall proposed to support Chartism by organising the different trades. Benbow's plan, comprising 28 closely written pages, was declared to be unsuitable and was not made public. As we shall see later on, Lovett and Collins drew up a plan of organisation, which was entirely based on educational associations.

[1] *Northern Star*, July 18, 1840.

The conference sat from July 20 to 24, 1840, and submitted the following proposal for organisation :—

The Chartists of Great Britain are incorporated in a National Charter Association. Its object is to obtain a Radical Reform of the House of Commons ; in other words a full and faithful representation of the entire people of the United Kingdom. The principles requisite to secure such a representation are : the right of voting for members of parliament by every male of 21 years of age and of sound mind ; no property qualification for members of parliament ; payment of members ; the ballot ; division of electoral districts, giving to each district a proportionate of representatives according to the number of electors ; annual elections. To accomplish the foregoing objects none but peaceable and constitutional means shall be employed, such as public meetings to discuss grievances arising from the existing system, and to show the utility of the proposed changes and to petition parliament to adopt the same. All persons will become members of this association on condition of signing a declaration, signifying their agreement with its objects, principles, and constitution, when they shall be presented with cards of membership, which shall be renewed quarterly and for which they shall each pay the sum of twopence. Wherever possible the members shall be formed into classes of ten persons, which classes shall meet weekly ; and one out of and by each class shall be nominated leader and appointed by the executive, who shall collect from each member one penny per week. Each town shall be divided into wards and divisions according to the plan of the Municipal Reform Act. Once a month a meeting of members of the said wards shall be held, when addresses shall be delivered and the society's business transacted. The leaders of the said classes shall attend the meeting and report about the state of the classes, in lawful and temperate language. At the first meeting of each ward or division a collector shall be nominated and appointed by the executive, to whom the class leaders shall pay the moneys collected from the class members. And the said collector shall hand over the money to the treasurer of the town at the weekly meeting of the council. Each principal town,

with its suburban villages, shall have a council of nine persons, including an assistant treasurer and secretary. The local council shall meet once weekly and shall have the power of appropriating half the moneys collected for local purposes. They shall also see that the recommendations of the executive be carried out. At the head of the N.C.A. there will be an executive of seven members, including the treasurer and secretary. The members of the executive shall be elected by the whole party and shall be paid for their work; they shall be employed at the same time as missionaries. The general treasurer will publish a statement of accounts once a week in the Chartist newspapers.

This plan of organisation was adopted on July 24, 1840. It will be seen that the plan of organisation, as laid down by the conference, possessed a centralising character and was by no means legal, nevertheless it was adopted and carried out. The Chartist movement retained the name "National Charter Association" until the very end.

At the close of the conference the delegates issued an address to the Chartists, who were invited to join the organisation and to work for its objects within constitutional limits, above all to avoid forming secret societies, to further the cause of temperance and the diffusion of knowledge, and especially to support and to win subscribers for the Chartist press.

The plan of organisation was approved by their comrades in the country, but only about 20,000 joined the N.C.A.

The release of Lovett, Collins, M'Douall, and other Chartist leaders who had been sent to prison in 1839 contributed to revive the cause of Chartism in the summer of 1840, for they visited many towns in Great Britain, held meetings and took part in demonstrations. These meetings reunited the Chartists. The old hopes were aroused by the inspired words of the martyrs, who exhorted their followers to perseverance, to unity and to the unabated continuance of the struggle. The result of the manifesto must have been considerable, for even the Liberal press could no longer ignore it.[1]

[1] *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, 1840, p. 811.

2.—OTHER PLANS FOR ORGANISATION

During the last weeks of the London Convention of 1839 O'Brien came to the firm conclusion that the Chartist organisations could only escape the dangers of secret societies and conspiracies if they concentrated all their activity upon parliamentary elections and the diffusion of political knowledge. Therefore he proposed that the Chartists should bring forward their own nominated candidates at all parliamentary elections wherever possible, so as to give them the opportunity to expound the principles of the party. The Chartists should likewise attend election meetings of the other parties, take part in discussions and move amendments to the resolutions laid before these meetings. The aforesaid conference appended O'Brien's proposals to its plan of organisation and recommended the adoption.

M'Douall's plan of organisation was quite different in its character. He tried to group together working men who were already Chartists in Chartist associations on the basis of their trades, to permeate the trade unions with the Chartist spirit, so that they should eventually form the basis of the agitation. Organisation on these lines was carried out to a considerable extent both in London and Manchester. Combined Chartist and trade organisations existed in these districts down to the end of 1842. In the Chartist press of 1841 and 1842 we are continually finding mention of organisations called the Chartist association of shoemakers, of hatters, of joiners, of stockingers, etc.[1]

The scheme of organisation proposed by Lovett and Collins was based on educational associations, because they did not come within the limits of the Corresponding Act and therefore it would be possible to form a national organisation with branches. Whilst in prison at Warwick they wrote a pamphlet, entitled "Chartism," with this end in view. Both of them were convinced that above everything else the working classes were

[1] *Chartist and Republican Journal*, April 17, 1841; *British Statesman*, June 19, August 6 and 13, 1842; *Northern Star*, August 20, 1842.

lacking in education. It was only because they were uneducated that they could fall into the hands of an O'Connor, an Attwood or any other politician of the middle classes, who allied themselves with the working men for their own ends and became their idol. In a circular to the Chartists they declared :—

" You must become your own social and political regenerators or you will never enjoy freedom. You must be intelligent and moral, else no revolution will help you. Most of your grievances are due to class legislation. Our agitation has been hitherto an external one ; we appealed rather to the senses than to the mind. Our public meetings have on many occasions been the arenas of passionate invective, party spirit, and personal idolatry, rather than public assemblies for deliberation and discussion, dissemination of knowledge, and inculcation of principles. We need political power to enable us to improve to any extent our material condition, but we need also sobriety and moral culture. Systematic education is necessary. . . . On the strength of these convictions we have drawn up our plan, which is not exclusive, but supplementary to the Chartist organisations already in existence. Our plan is to form a National Association for promoting the political and social improvement of the people. Our plan is : (1) To establish in one general body persons of all creeds, classes, and opinions who are desirous of promoting the political and social improvement of the people. (2) To create and extend an enlightened public opinion in favour of the People's Charter and by every just and peaceful means to secure its enactment, so that the industrious classes may be placed in possession of the franchise—the most important step to all political and social reformation. (3) To appoint as many missionaries as may be deemed necessary to visit the different districts to enlighten and organise the people. (4) To establish circulating libraries from 100 to 200 volumes each, containing the most useful works on politics, morals, sciences, and history. (5) To print tracts and pamphlets for circulation. (6) To erect public halls or schools for the people throughout the kingdom. Such halls to be used during the day as infant, preparatory, and high schools. Such halls to have two playgrounds, rooms for cold

and hot baths, laboratory and workshops, where the teachers and the children may be taught science by experiments as well as the elements of trades. (7) Normal or teachers' schools, for the purpose of forming schoolmasters. (8) Agricultural and industrial schools, as may be required for the education and support of the orphan children of the association. If the members who signed the National Petition belonged to such an association, and paying about one penny per week, they would be able to effect the following important objects every year: (*a*) the erection of 80 district halls or normal or industrial schools at £3,000 each, or together £240,000; (*b*) 710 circulating libraries at £20 each, or together £14,200; (*c*) 4 missionaries at £200 a year, or together £800; (*d*) circulation of 20,000 pamphlets or flyleaves every week at 15 shillings per 1000, or together £780; (*e*) expenses for printing, postage, and salaries, £700. Sum total, £256,480. Since the income would amount to £257,180, there would be a small surplus of £700 for unforeseen expenses."[1]

Lovett's plan therefore was to found an organisation subordinate to the N.C.A., for the purpose of diffusing knowledge and of imparting education to the working classes.

At the same time that these plans were published the temperance or total abstinence movement made headway among the Chartists. Henry Vincent was its most zealous apostle. The *English Chartist Circular* bore the sub-title *Temperance Record*. Finally, Christian Chartists came forward in Scotland and Birmingham, carrying Chartism into the churches and instilling Chartist ideas into the Sunday sermons. O'Connor opposed these efforts and displayed great journalistic activity from his prison cell at York, writing an article on "Church Chartism, Teetotal Chartism, Knowledge Chartism," etc. He opposed the policy of permeating Chartism with religion, temperance[2] and knowledge. The greater part of his article was directed against Christian Chartism, whilst temperance and knowledge were

[1] Lovett and Collins, *Chartism*, 1841; *English Chartist Circular*, No. 16; Lovett, *Life*, 1876, p. 248.

[1] A year later O'Connor became a total abstainer, since most of the Chartists had declared in favour of temperance.

dismissed in a few sentences.[1] Soon, however, he took up the cudgels against Lovett, who was bold enough to write against hero-worship, that is to say, against the O'Connor cult and against exhibitions and rowdy meetings. O'Connor and his clique felt that the attack was directed against them, and regarded it as an attempt to stir up the people against them. They stigmatised Lovett, Hetherington, and James Watson as traitors and deserters, as tools of the Whigs and of O'Connell.[2] That was quite sufficient. Drilled by the *Northern Star* to regard O'Connor as infallible, the Chartists in many localities passed resolutions hostile to the London leader of the working men. Lovett made no rejoinder. Hetherington was the only one to take up the gauntlet, but it only resulted in unpleasant recriminations, rendering it quite impossible for the old rift between O'Connor and the London artisans ever to be healed. O'Connor again turned to " the fustian jackets, blistered hands, and unshorn chins," and instead of producing the proofs of treachery of Lovett and his friends which had been demanded, O'Connor merely heaped suspicion upon suspicion against his opponents.[3] It was the old contrast between the Irish agrarian revolutionary and the intelligent section of the working classes of the metropolis. O'Connor had learned nothing from the tragic events of the latter half of 1839. He was again full of boasting and threats of the invincible might and revolutionary power of the Chartists. A month after his crossing swords with Hetherington, O'Connor addressed the Irish landlords as follows :

" Well organised as we are, yet all hope failing of such immediate social change as we look for, we shall be left no alternative by your refusal but to experimentalise upon your properties. My Lords and Gentlemen ! We can rob you all in less than six weeks, though you had the Court, the Lords, and the Commons with you, and having done so, you would be thrown into revolution with the fundholder, the parson, and the usurer."

O'Connor tried to convince the Irish landlords in this manner

[1] *Northern Star*, April 3, 1841. [2] *Ibid.*, April 10 and 17.
[3] *Ibid.*, May and June, 1841.

that it would be more sensible and more advantageous for them to nationalise their land or to lease it to small holders.[1]

Holding these opinions, he could only regard Lovett's plan as an act of treachery and cowardice.[2]

3.—ELECTORAL POLICY

In 1841 the question of electoral policy became the order of the day for the Chartists. Among the middle classes there was a distinct and growing tendency to make overtures to the Chartists, and, on the other hand, among the Chartists there was an undercurrent in favour of an alliance with the Radical elements of the middle classes, in order to work together for the cause of universal suffrage. Among the Liberals the desire to come into touch with the labour movement was fostered by the courageous sacrifices of the Chartists, the speeches of the persecuted workers in their defence, the great extent of the agitation in favour of the old ideals of Radicalism, no less than by the forbidding attitude of the government to all further electoral reform and its obstinate and decided opposition to the Anti-Corn-Law League. Since 1836 the people had shown that they craved for political activity and were keenly interested in parliamentary action, and they had created political organisations in order to obtain the Charter. Why should the Liberals keep aloof from a movement of this kind, which strove for civil rights and constitutional liberties? The movement, to be sure, still displayed considerable immaturity, but the Liberals ascribed this to such adventurers as O'Connor, Taylor, etc. A tendency to meet this desire halfway was exhibited by some of the Chartist leaders, such as Lovett, and somewhat later on by O'Brien. The failure of the National Petition, the persecutions and excesses of 1839 and 1840, induced the Chartists to proceed more warily with the work, and to induce the intellectuals of the middle classes to support the Charter. This question had been mooted even in the General Convention (1839), and an appeal was issued

[1] *Northern Star*, July 10, 1841.

[2] *Ibid.*, March 28, 1840; July 17, 1841; *cp.* also Thomas Frost, *Forty Years' Recollections*, 1880, p. 173 and *sqq.*

to the intellectuals and the Radicals to declare in favour of the Charter.[1] In 1841 this idea came to life again, but there were few who had the courage to state the question openly and clearly for discussion. They were afraid of the people and they were afraid of O'Connor. For years the people had been warned against the middle classes. For years it had been drummed into their ears that the middle classes were their real enemies. How could anyone give the advice now to the people to enter into alliance with the middle classes? Would they not regard such counsels as treachery? The people hated the Whigs: "the vile, bloody Whigs," as the *Northern Star* called them. And were the Liberals any different from the Whigs? Better an open enemy than a false and treacherous friend! Better a Tory than a Whig! This was the view of the masses and this was O'Connor's mode of reasoning. But when it was a question of working in parliament for a Chartist petition, to whom did the Chartists address themselves? To the Liberals. And who voted for the petition? The Liberals. And who were subsequently opposed by O'Connor and the *Northern Star*? The Liberals.

It was only the leaders of the London working men who held a different opinion. "Unfortunately, the Chartists," said Hetherington in a public meeting, "have always most violently opposed those who approached nearest to them." [2]

In the midst of all these questions which cropped up the Liberals called a meeting at Leeds in order to arrive at an understanding with the Chartists. The following speakers were announced: Roebuck, Colonel Perronet Thompson, Sharman Crawford, Joseph Hume and Daniel O'Connell—all Radical members of Parliament who had co-operated in the production of the People's Charter. The meeting took place on January 21, 1841. Hume moved the following resolution:—

"That the great experiment made by means of the Reform Bill to improve the conditions of the country has failed to attain the end desired by the people, and a further reform having therefore become necessary, it is the opinion of this meeting that the united efforts of all reformers ought to be directed to obtain

[1] *Charter*, July 21, 1839. [2] *Northern Star*, January 28, 1843.

such a further enlargement of the franchise as should make the interests of the representatives identical with those of the whole country, and by this means secure a just government for all classes of the people."

The resolution was couched in general terms, for its object was to promote a coalition. The Radicals who had been announced to speak expressed themselves unreservedly in favour of Universal Suffrage. The Chartists who spoke comprised Moir from Glasgow, Collins and the Christian Chartist O'Neil from Birmingham, and Lowery from Newcastle. The resolution was carried unanimously and then found its way into the great wastepaper basket, where the majority of resolutions passed at meetings find their grave. Three months after this meeting a parliamentary by-election took place at Nottingham. Mr. Walter, the editor of the *Times*, was the Conservative candidate, a certain Larpent stood as the government candidate. The Chartists had a number of votes at their disposal in this constituency and threw themselves heart and soul into the election contest, working for Walter, who was returned by a majority of 278 votes on April 27. It was never known whether it was the Chartist votes that turned the scales, but it caused a great sensation: "The Chartists as allies of the Tories! The Chartists a factor in elections!"

This event gave the Chartists a real and living interest in discussions of electoral policy, which became all the keener since a dissolution of parliament could not be postponed longer. The Whigs had been at the helm since 1830, but from 1837 they had had no solid majority. The discontent in the country was frequently attributed to the Whigs. Fresh elections and a change of government were therefore imminent.

The Conservative leader, Sir Robert Peel, made use of this feeling, and on June 5, 1841, he moved a vote of censure on the government in order to force them to resign. His policy was successful, and the Whigs threw down the reins of government.

Before this resignation had taken effect a conference was held in London of twelve Chartist delegates to present a petition to parliament in favour of the liberation of the Chartist prisoners. M'Douall was the leading spirit of this conference, which sat

from May 3 to 28, in order to canvass members of parliament in favour of the petition. The petition contained 1,348,848 signatures and was as comprehensive as its predecessor of July, 1839. According to all appearances, the conference also set itself the task of deliberating and deciding on electoral policy, for on May 15 it published an address to the Chartists, in which the delegates violently attacked the Whigs and recommended the following lines of action :—

" It is better at times to submit to a real despotism than to a government of perfidious, treacherous, and pretended friends. We are natural enemies to Whiggism and Toryism, but being unable to destroy both factions, we advise you to destroy the one faction by making a tool of the other. We advise you to upset the ministerial candidates on every occasion, to doubt their professions and disbelieve their hustings' promises. They even propose what they term a large extension of the suffrage. Be not deluded again—stand by your Charter, accept nothing less, and like the stern and independent Romans, rather bring your enemies under a despotism than be deluded with their treacherous professions . . . elect Chartists, or upset a ministerial hack."[1]

On May 27 the consideration of the Chartist petition was placed on the order of the day in the House of Commons. This extremely comprehensive document was carried into parliament by eighteen working men, and Thomas Slingby Duncombe, a Radical member, introduced it in a long speech and recommended it to the favourable consideration of the House. The attendance at the House was not nearly so great as on the occasion of the discussion of the National Petition in July, 1839. Nevertheless there was a debate, in which ministerialists spoke in favour of the petition. The vote was taken at the close of the debate: 58 ministerialists voted for the adoption of the petition, and 58 Conservatives voted against it, whereupon the Speaker gave his casting vote against its adoption. The petition was therefore rejected.[2]

[1] *Northern Star*, May 22, 1841.

[2] Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates*, third series, vol. 58, 1841, pp. 740–756.

This want of success was followed by the return of the delegates to their districts in order to take part in the election contests, which were fought in July and August, 1841.

The election policy of the Chartists lacked uniformity, in spite of the decision that had been laid down for their guidance at elections. The *Northern Star* and O'Connor were indeed in complete agreement with the resolution of the conference, but they lacked the courage to tell the Chartists in unequivocal terms that they were to work and vote for the Tories.

Under the heading " Dissolution of Parliament," the *Northern Star* of June 12, 1841, printed two leading articles. The first asked :—

" What's to be done ? The answer is clear. Let the great principle of universal suffrage be practically asserted. How ? In every city and borough let the people select their own men, qualified to sit, making the following the test of their principles : (1) The Charter ; (2) Immediate liberation of all Chartist prisoners and restoration of Chartist exiles to their homes ; (3) Repeal of the English Poor Law ; (4) Ten hours' work and a complete reform of the child-slaying factory system ; (5) Annihilation of rural police and the placing of town and borough police under the control of the inhabitants ; (6) Repeal of all laws fettering the press. Chartists ! The man who will vote for and do his utmost to accomplish the foregoing list of reforms—he is your man. Wherever by splitting with the Tories you can return your man, do so. Wherever by splitting with the Whigs you can return your man, do so. But where you cannot find a qualified man to start as your candidate, or where, owing to poverty, you dare not risk the expenses of a contest then have your candidates, elect them by show of hands This costs nothing. Select among you the honest and best talented. Let integrity be the first qualification, ability the second."

Then follows a second leader, which is a complete contradiction of the first. It is exclusively directed against the Whigs, whose defeat was regarded as the supreme duty of the Chartists. The main object was no longer the Charter, nor the struggle for

Chartist principles; it was to fight against the ministerial candidates—against the Whigs and for the Tories:

"Wherever we cannot contest an election with our own resources, let us do our best to secure a defeat of the Whigs."

And since the Chartists were not strong enough in any single constituency to achieve success at the polls by their own efforts, O'Connor's advice practically amounted to the recommendation that the Chartists should give their votes and assistance to the Tories.

In addition to the foregoing electioneering advice, there were still other recommendations in the Chartist movement, viz., those of the London labour leaders and of O'Brien.

The views of the London labour-leaders on election policy were at the opposite pole to O'Connor's. They recommended the Chartists to support those Radicals and Liberals who pledged themselves to vote in parliament for the Charter and against all reactionary measures. In the opinion of the London men, the Chartists could not reckon upon running their own candidates. It would therefore be the best plan to work or to vote for those Radical and Liberal candidates who had supported the Chartist petitions and who had declared in favour of popular freedom on other occasions.

The third line of policy was advocated by O'Brien and his adherents. Their opinion was somewhat to the following effect:—

We have nothing to expect either from the Tories or the Whigs. The Tories are reactionary, out and out, and hate everything that is democratic. Their impending victory will chiefly be due to the circumstance that "public opinion" expects the Tories to persecute Chartism more ruthlessly and to stamp it out—that is to say, to accomplish what the Whigs were unable to accomplish. It is therefore impossible for Chartists to help the Tories to gain their victory. The recommendation by the conference and by O'Connor is therefore wrong. On the other hand, we cannot follow the policy of the London leaders, for Chartism has nothing to expect from the middle classes, since the interests of both are diametrically opposed. We must

therefore make use of the elections mainly as a means for agitation. And the English methods of election lend themselves to this purpose in a high degree. We have nominations and polling. Every British inhabitant can take part in the nominations. The Chartists can therefore put up their own candidates, who will appear on the hustings with those of the other parties on the appointed days of nomination; they will deliver their election addresses and will call upon the people to vote for them by a show of hands. There is no doubt that the people will vote on nomination days for Chartist candidates and will declare their intention of wishing to be represented in parliament exclusively by Chartists. When the voting by show of hands has come to an end and the Chartist candidate is elected, then the people must adopt a strongly worded resolution declaring that the candidates they have elected are the only representatives they will recognise, and when this is done they must instantly leave the hustings. The people do not, as a rule, participate in the polling, which takes place a few days later. But if the Chartists have a number of votes in many towns, which could turn the balance between Tory and Whig, then the Chartists may negotiate with either the Tories or the Whigs, for there is absolutely no difference between the two parties. If one of these parties declared itself prepared to support some of the Chartist candidates at the polls, and to ensure their return, then the Chartist voters may act in reciprocity by bestowing their votes upon them. The result of this policy will be twofold; in the first place it will teach the working classes always and at all times to vote for their own candidates and to remain strictly in opposition to both Whig and Tory, for even when a Chartist votes for candidates prepared to compromise he is indirectly voting for his own representatives. In the second place the difference between the results of the nominations and of the polling will reveal the glaring wrong under which the British people is suffering; they will show that the people are practically not represented.

O'Brien was also of opinion that the actual representatives of the people elected by nomination should form the National Council of the unrepresented people until the dissolu-

tion of parliament. O'Connor's election policy was pro-Tory; that of the London leaders was pro-Liberal. O'Brien's was the policy of a relentless class war by a proletariate that was absolutely unable to convert its votes into political power.

These views on election policy brought O'Brien into collision with his leader, O'Connor. The opposition soon developed into enmity, for O'Brien did not mince matters, but plainly and openly declared that O'Connor must be either mad or dishonest.[1]

O'Connor's policy was, however, neither insane nor dishonest, but it was the logical consequence of a policy calculated on a quick, external success. O'Connor above all dealt only with parties engaged in parliamentary intrigues, and impelled by a craving for offices, honours, and highly paid posts. He neither knew nor appreciated the economic meaning of the social classes of which parties are the political expression. Thinking in this manner O'Connor believed that the position of the Chartists must remain a bad one so long as the Whigs were at the helm of the State—the fact of their being a governing party caused them to be averse from sweeping reforms. And since the Tories were in any case reactionary, it was obvious that the Chartists were opposed by a single reactionary and powerful body. But if the Whigs were beaten, they would then form the opposition and would adopt the language of liberty in order to return as soon as possible to the manger of government. The Whigs as the party of opposition would make advances to the Chartists and work in parliament in favour of their demands.

It was an easy task for O'Brien to dispose of these superficial views of parliamentary action; in view of the fact that the Chartist agitation aimed at obtaining political power for the working classes as a means to a revolution of the rights of property in the interests of labour, it would be madness to allow Chartism to be deviated from its course by the game of intrigue between Tory and Whig and to wish to model the election policy of the productive classes upon it. O'Connor, in approving of a policy of this nature, was sacrificing principle to an illusory expediency.

[1] *Northern Star*, June 19, 1841.

O'Brien at the same time adversely criticised the policy of the London leaders, the "knowledge-mongers," who were included in the Radicals and Liberals.

All these controversies were written in the prisons where both leaders were immured.

In spite of O'Brien's mental superiority, the people adopted O'Connor's views. Their hatred for the Whigs was incomparably fiercer than for the Tories. The people had no longer any recollection of the acts of the Tories from 1812 to 1819, of the wholesale executions of January, 1813, the system of espionage and the manufactured insurrections of 1817, or of Peterloo and the Six Acts. They only knew that the Whigs had thrown the Chartist leaders into prison, had passed the new Poor Law and the treacherous Reform Bill. They did not take into account the events of the years 1838, 1839, and 1840, when half the working class had armed itself with muskets, pikes, and grenades, when the labour leaders incited the people to violent upheavals, and drew up plans and projects for insurrections, without the Whigs carrying out a single sentence of death. We may take it as a rule that social revolutionary movements hate the Liberals more fiercely than the Conservatives. An oppressed people demanding rights expects *à priori* more from Liberals than from Conservatives—Liberalism is so deeply permeated with abstract ideas of freedom that such expectations are naturally raised. But since the point of view of an oppressed class is social, and its aims are economic, while Liberalism deals, or dealt during the last century, mainly with constitutional changes and political freedom, it is inevitable that Liberals, when returned to power, should disappoint these expectations of the people. Fanned by the flames of disappointment, the opposition of the people to Liberalism in power is transformed into bitter hatred, which for a time darkens counsel and prevents clear thinking. The Liberals appear not only in the light of enemies, but also of traitors and cowards, who must be chastised and destroyed at all costs. Better an open enemy than a false friend! Better a Tory than a Liberal!

O'Connor was further influenced by an idea, which was not

in the minds of the people. O'Connor, who considered land to be the only true source of life, and in his revolutionary moments dreamed of the forcible expropriation of the landlords, merely regarded the Liberals as a buffer party standing between the people and the landowners, and therefore acting as a hindrance to a straight fight. His plan therefore was to destroy this buffer party so as to clear the battlefield between the two opposing armies of the robbers and the robbed. He considered the whole policy of the Whigs and Liberals to be to distract the Chartist army from marching straight to the field of battle.

During the election campaign of July and August, 1841, which returned the Tories to parliament with a considerable majority, the Chartists selected candidates at many places, but mostly for nomination purposes. In these cases the people voted everywhere by show of hands for the Chartist candidates, excepting at Leeds, the seat of the *Northern Star*, where both the Chartist candidates, Leach and Williams, were rejected by the people. There can be absolutely no doubt that if the people had possessed the franchise at that period they would have returned about a hundred Chartists to parliament as the representatives of the people. It was a matter of course for the operative of that time to regard the Chartist as his representative. It was quite different in the case of those elections at which the Chartist candidates went to the polls, that is to say, when they showed a real intention of becoming members of parliament. Such elections took place at Banbury, where Vincent stood as a candidate, at Nottingham, where M'Douall was a candidate in coalition with the Tories, at Marylebone and at Brighton. The number of votes cast for the four Chartist leaders at the polls was quite insignificant. The result of O'Connor's election policy was that the Chartists were accused of having allied themselves with the deadliest enemies of freedom. It was at this time, as already mentioned, that the breach occurred between O'Connor and O'Brien, which burst into open hostility in the early part of 1842, and exercised a baleful influence upon Chartism. It sowed mistrust and suspicion and discord, and it left the leadership of the Chartist masses exclusively in

O'Connor s hands. Lovett and O'Brien were cleared out of the way ; and they were the only men who could act as a counterpoise to O'Connor at conferences or could carry any weight with the people. Soon small cliques began to form among the Chartists, gathering round the wrangling leaders and poisoning party life by mischief-making, by the publication of private conversations and all manner of tittle-tattle.[1]

In August, O'Connor, O'Brien, and other prisoners were set at liberty, having served their sentences. The Chartists sent no less than 56 delegates to York to congratulate O'Connor on his release from prison. A triumphal car was specially built for this occasion, and O'Connor received—at his request—a suit of fustian, in order to symbolise his equality with the factory hands. The song, "The Lion of Freedom," resounded wherever the great leader showed his face. The meetings held by the liberated leaders throughout the country, as well as the defeat of the Whigs in the parliamentary elections, raised the enthusiasm of the people to its highest pitch in the later months of 1841 and the early months of 1842. The N.C.A. flourished as never before or since, yet the number of its enrolled members did not exceed 40,000, but Chartism possessed the unbounded trust of the labouring masses and of many trade unions.[2] There were hundreds of thousands of Chartists who refused to join the N.C.A., either because they regarded the organisation as illegal or because they felt no confidence in its leaders.

4.—CHARTISTS AND RADICALS

The questions of election policy to which the parliamentary elections of July and August, 1841, had given rise became even more acute in 1842. From the autumn of 1841 a serious industrial crisis prevailed in Great Britain, severely affecting a large part of the middle classes. The distress increased, and the fear became universal that the year 1842 might be marked by a social catastrophe. Nothing could be expected from parlia-

[1] *Northern Star*, May 14 (Report of the Convention of May 3), 1842.

[2] *Northern Star*, February 19, 1842.

ment. When even the Whigs had destroyed all hope of legislation for restoring trade and industry to a healthy condition, how could any industrial remedy be expected from the Tories? The universal distress turned the thoughts of the educated middle class in favour of reform. Counsels of despair were intermingled with a friendly feeling towards reform. Surely nothing could be worse than the present condition; if universal suffrage were granted, things might indeed be much better, for the Chartist agitation, which had contributed so much to fostering enmity between the working and the middle classes, would have attained its object. Besides, whenever the economic catastrophe arrived it would be met by a certain degree of understanding between the working and the middle classes, which would facilitate the inauguration of reforms with a view to the revival of industry.

Joseph Sturge, of Birmingham, the universally respected friend of humanity, stood at the head of this movement for parliamentary reform. He was also a member of the Anti-Corn Law League, and at the same time worked for universal suffrage. The project of effecting a reconciliation between the working and the middle classes lay very near his heart. He attempted to convince his friends that a class parliament is at the root of most social ills and that there was no possibility of any legislation in the direction of justice and happiness so long as the working class was denied the franchise, and thereby the capacity of transforming parliament into a truly national parliament. Sturge and those of his friends who held the same views founded for this purpose in the latter half of 1841 the weekly paper, *Nonconformist*, in which democratic principles were advocated. This group of thinkers comprised, amongst others, John Bright, who, in conjunction with Cobden, was about to play such an important part in the agitation for free trade; another leading member of it was the Rev. Thomas Spencer, a progressive theologian and educationist, who regarded the Christian Church as an organic growth, and therefore needing reformation from time to time, an adaptation to external environment. His nephew was Herbert Spencer, the philosopher

of evolution, who made his political *début* in a series of articles that appeared in the *Nonconformist* of August and September, 1841.

In the second week of February, 1842, Sturge convened a public meeting in London, in order to initiate a discussion on universal suffrage between the leading Chartists and Radicals. William Lovett accepted the invitation, and spoke in favour of the People's Charter and the abolition of the corn taxes. He explained to the Radicals how the suspicion had arisen among the Chartists that the Anti-Corn Law agitation was hostile to them, and expressed the opinion that the free traders could easily clear themselves from this suspicion by declaring unreservedly for the Charter.[1]

The discord in the Chartist ranks rendered Sturge's plan inestimable service. Many Chartists rallied round him so that a conference could be held in Birmingham from April 5 to 8, 1842, in which 103 delegates took part. Sturge, Bright, Spencer, Lovett, Collins, O'Brien, Vincent, J. R. Richardson and many other leaders appeared and discussed the question of founding an organisation to promote the six points of the People's Charter. All the delegates were united on the principles of the reform, and resolved to call another conference for the purpose of arriving at an understanding on the details of these principles. Among the Chartist delegates there were five from Bradford, who regarded the conference itself as an act of treachery directed against the working class, and as an attempt to weaken or obliterate the class war, and they sent secret reports to O'Connor against O'Brien. As soon as the conference decided to found an organisation, entitled the " National Complete Suffrage Union " (N.C.S.U.), the Bradford delegates were absolutely convinced of the correctness of their deductions and stigmatised O'Brien as a traitor. O'Connor and the *Northern Star* now possessed the material to hold up Lovett and O'Brien to the contempt of the people.[2] The N.C.S.U. appeared to them to be an organisation founded with the express intention of destroying the National Chartist Association, although Sturge had expressly stated that

[1] *Nonconformist*, February 16, 1842. [2] *Northern Star*, April 9, 1842.

the Chartists were not to give up their own organisations, since the N.C.S.U. had only been founded for those who could not join the Chartist organisations. O'Connor reprinted in the *Northern Star* an article from the *Poor Man's Guardian* directed against the middle classes, in order to demonstrate O'Brien's treachery in black and white.

The accused man was unable to reply to the attack before July, when he became editor of the *British Statesman* in London. His answer was as follows :—

". . . Many of you looking back to our language in the *Poor Man's Guardian* and other publications of ours are apt to suspect that we have to some extent deserted your interests, because we do not come out in the *Statesman* with the same withering denunciations of the middle classes which formerly characterised our writing. Do not, good friends, judge us after this fashion. Judge us not by the epithets we use but by the principles we advocate, and by the tendency of our policy to promote your interests at a time of difficulties and dangers unexampled in our history.[1] The language which served you so effectually in 1834-1837 could not serve you now. . . . It was then necessary to rouse you, as with a rattling peal of thunder. The case is widely different now. You are wide awake ; you need no rousing now. The danger now is, not that you will not move, but that you will move too fast before your friends have been able to detach some of your enemy's forces from him and to make them either neutral or auxiliary to you in the coming conflict. In 1834 the middle classes treated us with scorn ; now vast numbers of them not only recognise us as an integral part of the body politic, but they have actually paid court to us. Never mind the motives of this. Never mind whether they act thus from policy or principle. Our business is to deal with them as we find them—to accept their advance and proffered aid in a frank and friendly spirit, to reciprocate such acts by every means at our disposal that involve no compromise of principle, and above all not to commit the suicidal folly of

[1] O'Brien seemed to have had a presentiment that an insurrection was being plotted in Lancashire, and it actually broke out in 1842.

confounding the honest portion of them, who would give us our rights, with the selfish knaves who would not—by involving the whole class in one indiscriminate cloud of abuse. Working men! We appeal to your reason whether this be not an honest as well as a sound policy, and whether we are not justified in using a different language towards the middle classes now from what we used five, or even one year ago, when they were in open arms against us?"[1]

We shall soon see what O'Brien meant by speaking of the coming crisis and of impending dangers. In the meantime we will continue the account of the activity of the N.C.S.U. This activity was so successful that even O'Connor adopted a friendly attitude towards it and supported Sturge. In August, 1842, a parliamentary by-election took place in Nottingham, where Sturge was the candidate of the Radicals and Walter (publisher of the *Times*) was the Conservative candidate. O'Connor and the best Chartist speakers now came to Nottingham to work for Sturge and against Walter. Only J. R. Stephens, whom O'Connor now dubbed "the renegade parson," spoke in favour of Walter. The latter was elected by a majority of 84 votes. He received 1,085 votes against 1,001 cast for Sturge.

At the same time the Chartists resolved to send delegates to the conference of the N.C.S.U. that was to be held in December. The conference sat from December 27 to 29, 1842. More than 300 delegates were present, and O'Connor was among their number. The chief debate turned on the following point: the committee of the N.C.S.U. had drafted a Bill containing the six points and moved for this draft to form the basis of discussion. The words Charter and Chartism were so repugnant to the middle classes that, although they were ready to declare for universal suffrage, they would have kept aloof from the agitation if they had been expected to declare for the Charter. The committee was of opinion that it would be all the same to the people whatever the name might be under which it accepted universal suffrage and the other demands; the main point was that it accepted them.

[1] *British Statesman*, July 9, 1842.

Lovett, who belonged to the committee, had no idea, up to the moment of the meeting of the conference, that a Bill of this kind was going to be prepared; indeed, he was, on the contrary, under the impression that the People's Charter would form the basis of discussion. After the spokesman of the committee had made his proposal and moved the resolution, O'Connor and Lovett both rose and asked permission to speak. Although O'Connor had been the first to rise, he gave way to Lovett, who stated:

"I rise with considerable pain and anxiety to impress on the spokesman of the committee the necessity of withdrawing a few words of his resolution and substituting a few others. The words to be withdrawn are 'that the Bill to be presented by the N.C.S.U. to be the basis of the discussion,' and to substitute 'that the document entitled the People's Charter be taken as the basis of discussion.'" (Loud and prolonged cheering). "Impressed with the conviction that the present object of the N.C.S.U. was to effect, if possible, a cordial union between the middle and working classes, and not merely to conciliate one and neglect the other, I have joined the union. . . . The N.C.S.U. will never succeed in reconciling the working and middle classes if it is ashamed of the Charter. The people have made great sacrifices for the Charter; in order to secure its enactment vast numbers of our countrymen have suffered imprisonment and transportation. I admit that the noisy agitation connected with the Charter has created a considerable degree of prejudice in the minds of the middle classes against the Charter. But after all, it is prejudice. If the middle classes are not strong enough to give up such prejudices, how can they be in the position of declaring in favour of universal suffrage? Therefore I ask the committee to withdraw those words in the resolution. If this is not done, then I fear that the conference will lead to nothing."

The dispute between the Chartists and the leaders of the N.C.S.U. did not in any degree turn upon a question of words. Men of the standing of Lovett, Spencer, or Sturge do not quarrel about mere formalities. The real reason lay deeper still. The

People's Charter was not only the programme of the agitation for the five years since its publication, but it had become the symbol of social reform or revolution ; it was bound up with the hopes, the ideas, and the social, plans of the working class. To change it for another bit of paper would be to tear part of the soul out of the hearts of the people, or to change social democracy into mere political democracy.

O'Connor spoke after Lovett :—

" I do not regret my act of courtesy towards Mr. Lovett. I have never been more pleased in my life than to give way to Mr. Lovett, and never have I been better repaid than in listening to the admirable explanation he has given. It had been my intention to contrast the merits of the small Bill with the demerits of the large Bill. Those clauses which are valuable have been taken from the Charter, and those which are useless are at the same time injurious. I know that the so-called physical force stigma is attached to the Charter. But whose fault is it that the workmen use their rough and rude way in asking for their rights ? It is the fault of those who have kept the workmen in ignorance and who degraded them. . . . I don't lead ; I am driven by the people. The people gave the lead to the agitation and we followed. It was a great consolation for me to find myself upon the platform of the Charter together with Mr. Lovett. I think the quarrels between us two have been due to the intermeddling of third parties, and I don't hesitate to express to Mr. Lovett my deep sorrow that I have ever mistaken his honesty and integrity. What was for me a task was for Mr. Lovett a duty, and I am glad that Mr. Lovett has availed himself of the opportunity of vindicating the principles and leaving me to follow him. For my part, I shall adhere to the course I have hitherto followed, and I would rather be a simple soldier in the battle for principle than a leader of an army in a battle for expediency."

Since neither the committee of the N.C.S.U. nor the Chartists could agree to a compromise, a vote was taken on the resolution and the amendment. Lovett's amendment obtained 193 votes, whilst the resolution of the committee obtained only 94 votes. This result implied a breach. The conference was practically

at an end, and the N.C.S.U. had received a fatal blow. There was no reconciliation even between the Chartist leaders, for Lovett did not believe in O'Connor's sincerity.[1]

5.—THE SECOND NATIONAL PETITION

From April 12 to May 12, 1842, 23 Chartist delegates assembled in a convention at London, in order to arrange for and to supervise the introduction of the second national petition in favour of the Charter. It was signed by not less than 3,315,752 working men. London and suburbs contributed 200,000 signatures, Manchester 99,680, Newcastle 92,000, Bradford 45,100, Glasgow and Lanarkshire 78,062, Birmingham 43,000, Leeds 41,000, Norwich 21,560, Rochdale 19,600, Preston 24,000, Oldham 15,000, Bolton 18,500, Ashton 14,200, Leicester 18,000, Huddersfield 23,180, Sheffield 27,200, Liverpool, 23,000, Staleybridge 10,000, Stockport 14,000, Burnley 14,000, Brighton 12,700, Merthyr Tydvil 13,900. There was not a single industrial locality in all Great Britain in which a large number of the working men were not adherents of Chartism. And the second national petition was much more revolutionary and more sharply expressed than the first. It ran as follows:—

"To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain and Ireland in Parliament assembled.

"Government originated from and was designed to protect the freedom and promote the happiness of, and ought to be responsible to the whole people. The only authority on which any body of men can make laws and govern society is delegation from the people. As government was designed for the benefit and protection of, and must be obeyed and supported by all, therefore all should be equally represented. Any form of government which fails to effect the purposes for which it was designed, and does not fully and completely represent the whole people, who are compelled to pay taxes for its support and obey the laws resolved upon by it, is unconstitutional, tyrannical, and ought to be amended or resisted. Your honourable House, as at present constituted, has not been elected by, and acts irresponsibly of the people; and hitherto has only represented parties, and benefited the few, regardless of miseries, grievances, and petitions of the many. Your honourable

[1] *Cp.* Thomas Cooper, *Life*, edition 1897, pp. 221–226.

House has enacted laws contrary to the expressed wishes of the people, and by unconstitutional means enforced obedience to them, thereby creating an unbearable despotism on the one hand and degrading slavery on the other. . . . In proof of their assertion your petitioners instance that your honourable House has not been elected by the people, that the population of Great Britain and Ireland is at present about 26 millions of persons, and yet out of this number little more than 900,000 have been permitted to vote in a recent election of representatives to make laws to govern the whole. The existing state of representation is not only extremely limited and unjust, but unequally divided and gives preponderating influence to the landed and moneyed interests to the utter ruin of the small trading and labouring classes. The borough of Guildford with a population of 3,920 returns to parliament as many members as the Tower Hamlets with a population of 300,000 ; Evesham with a population of 3,998 elects as many representatives as Manchester with a population of 200,000. . . . These being but a few instances of the enormous inequalities existing in what is called the representation of the people. Bribery, intimidation, corruption, perjury, and riot prevail at all parliamentary elections to an extent best understood by the members of your honourable House.

" Your petitioners complain that they are enormously taxed to pay the interest of what is termed the national debt, a debt amounting at present to 800 millions sterling, being only a portion of the enormous amount expended in cruel and expensive wars for the suppression of all liberty, by men not authorised by the people, and who consequently had no right to tax posterity for the outrages committed by them on mankind. And your petitioners loudly complain of the augmentation of that debt, after 26 years of almost uninterrupted peace and whilst poverty and discontent rage over the land. Taxation, both general and local, is at this time too enormous to be borne, and in the opinion of your petitioners is contrary to the Bill of Rights, where it is clearly expressed that no subject shall be compelled to contribute to any tax, tallage, or aid unless imposed by common consent in Parliament.

" In England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales thousands of people are dying from actual want ; and your petitioners, whilst sensible that poverty is the great exciting cause of crime, view with mingled astonishment and alarm the ill provision made for the poor, the aged, and the infirm ; and likewise perceive with feelings of indignation, the determination of your honourable House to continue the Poor Law in operation, notwithstanding the many proofs which have been afforded by sad experience of the unconstitutional principle of the Bill, of its unchristian character and of the cruel and

murderous effects produced upon the wages of working men and the lives of the subjects of this realm.

"Your petitioners would direct the attention of your honourable House to the great disparity existing between the wages of the producing millions and the salaries of those whose comparative usefulness ought to be questioned, where riches and luxury prevail amongst the rulers and poverty and starvation amongst the ruled. With all due respect and loyalty, your petitioners would compare the daily income of the Sovereign Majesty with that of thousands of working men of this nation; and whilst your petitioners have learned that Her Majesty receives daily for private use the sum of £164 17s. 10d., they have also ascertained that many thousands of families of the labourers are only in receipt of 3¾d. per head per day. Your petitioners have also learned that His Royal Highness Prince Albert receives each day the sum of £164, while thousands have to exist on 3d. a day. Your petitioners have also learned with astonishment that the King of Hanover daily receives £57 10s. whilst thousands of the taxpayers of this country live upon 2¾d. per head per day. Your petitioners have with pain and regret also learned that the Archbishop of Canterbury is daily in receipt of £52 10s. per day, whilst thousands of the poor have to maintain their families upon an income not exceeding 2d. per day. . . .

"Your petitioners know that it is the undoubted constitutional right of the people to meet freely, when, how, and where they choose, in public places, peaceably, in the day, to discuss their grievances, and political and other subjects, or for the purpose of framing, discussing, or passing any vote, petition, or remonstrance upon any subject whatsoever. Your petitioners complain that the right has unconstitutionally been infringed, and 500 well-disposed persons have been arrested, excessive bail demanded, tried by packed juries, sentenced to imprisonment, and treated as felons of the worst description. An unconstitutional police is distributed all over the country, at enormous cost, to prevent the due exercise of the people's rights. And your petitioners are of opinion that the Poor Law bastilles and the police stations, being co-existent, have originated from the same cause, viz., the increased desire on the part of the irresponsible few to oppress and starve the many. A vast and unconstitutional army is upheld at the public expense for the purpose of repressing public opinion in the three kingdoms and likewise to intimidate the millions in the due exercise of those rights and privileges which ought to belong to them.

"Your petitioners complain that the hours of labour, particularly of the factory workers, are protracted beyond the limits of human endurance, and that the wages earned, after unnatural application

to toil in heated and unhealthy workshops, are inadequate to sustain the bodily strength and to supply those comforts which are so imperative after an excessive waste of physical energy. Your petitioners also direct the attention of your honourable House to the starvation wages of the agricultural labourer, and view with horror and indignation the paltry income of those whose toil gives being to the staple food of the people. Your petitioners deeply deplore the existence of any kind of monopoly in this nation, and whilst they unequivocally condemn the levying of any tax upon the necessaries of life and upon those articles principally required by the labouring classes, they are also sensible that the abolition of any monopoly will never unshackle labour from its misery until the people possess that power under which all monopoly and oppression must cease; and your petitioners respectfully mention the existing monopolies of the suffrage, of paper money, of machinery, of land, of the public press, of means of travelling and transit, of religious worship, and of a host of other evils too numerous to mention, all arising from class legislation, but which your honourable House has always endeavoured to increase instead of to diminish.

"From the numerous petitions presented to your honourable House we conclude that you are fully acquainted with the grievances of the working men; and your petitioners pray that the rights and wrongs of labour may be considered with a view to the protection of the one and the removal of the other; because your petitioners are of opinion that it is the worst species of legislation which leaves the grievances of society to be removed only by violence or revolution, both of which may be apprehended if complaints are unattended to and petitions despised.

"Your petitioners complain that upwards of nine millions per annum are unjustly abstracted from them to maintain a church establishment . . . and entreat you to contrast the deeds of the clergy with the conduct of the founder of the Christian religion, who denounced worshippers of Mammon and taught charity, meekness, and brotherly love.

"Your petitioners maintain that it is the inherent, indubitable and constitutional right, founded upon the ancient practice of the realm of England and supported by well-approved statutes, of every male inhabitant of the United Kingdom, he being of age, of sound mind and non-convict of crime, and not confined under any judicial process, to exercise the election franchise in the choice of members to serve in the Commons House of Parliament."

The petition then enunciates the remaining five points of the Charter, and continues as follows:—

" Your petitioners complain of the many grievances borne by the people of Ireland, and contend that they are fully entitled to a repeal of the legislative union.[1]

" Your petitioners beg to assure your honourable House that they cannot within the limits of this petition set forth even a tithe of the many grievances of which they may justly complain ; but should your honourable House be pleased to grant your petitioners a hearing by representatives at the bar of your honourable House, your petitioners will be enabled to unfold a tale of wrong and suffering, of intolerable injustice, which will create utter astonishment in the minds of all benevolent and good men that the people of Great Britain and Ireland have so long quietly endured their wretched condition, brought upon them, as it has been, by unjust exclusion from political authority and by the manifold corruptions of class legislation.

" Exercising their constitutional right, your petitioners demand that your honourable House do remedy the many gross and manifest evils of which your petitioners complain, do immediately, without alteration, deduction or addition, pass into law the document entitled the People's Charter." [2]

On May 2, 1842, the petition was introduced by Thomas Duncombe, who spoke at length on the following day in its support. The speaker gave a fairly good survey, not however altogether devoid of inaccuracies, concerning the origin and the progress of the Radical movement in England from the seventh decade of the eighteenth century. He outlined the activity displayed by Cartwright, the Duke of Richmond, the London Corresponding Society, and the Radicals from 1817 to 1819, and then went on to speak about the violent agitation connected with the Reform Bill. The dissatisfaction of the people with the Reform Bill and the legislation of the Reformed Parliament had led up to the Charter, and now more than three million working men were petitioning for its introduction. Duncombe drew a vivid picture of the distress and desperate condition of the working class, and begged the House of Commons to allow the representatives of the petitioners to appear at the bar of the House and to present the case for the people by word of mouth.

[1] The Scotch and London delegates protested against the inclusion in the petition of the demand for the repeal of the union.

[2] Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates*, 1842, vol. 62, pp. 1376–1381.

Duncombe was of opinion that this request of the petitioners to be heard at the bar of the House was more practical and by far more important than their demand for the Charter to be discussed without delay and to be adopted without alteration.

Speeches on the same lines as that by Duncombe were then delivered by the Radicals and free traders, Dr. Bowring, Fielden, Roebuck, Wakley, and Joseph Hume. Both the Conservatives and the Whigs spoke in opposition to Duncombe. The discussion only produced two speeches worthy of notice; both of these speeches proceeded from the Whigs: from Thomas B. Macaulay and Lord John Russell. The former attacked the communism of the petition, the latter opposed its dependence on natural law, which he traversed from the utilitarian standpoint taken by Bentham.

Macaulay stated:—

"I am opposed to universal suffrage. I believe universal suffrage would be fatal to all purposes for which government exists and for which aristocracies and all other things exist, and that it is utterly incompatible with the very existence of civilisation. I conceive that civilisation rests on the security of property. While property is insecure, it is not in the power of the finest soil, or of the moral and intellectual constitution of any country to prevent the country sinking into barbarism, while, on the other hand, so long as property is secure it is not possible to prevent a country advancing in prosperity. . . . Therefore, we can never, without absolute danger, entrust the supreme government of the country to any class, which would, to a moral certainty, be induced to commit great and systematic inroads against the security of property. The petition must be considered as a sort of declaration of the intentions of the body, who, if the Charter is to become law, will become the sovereign body of the State—as a declaration of the intentions of those who would in that event return the majority of the representatives of the people to this House. What is the petition directed against? It is opposed to the national debt, monopoly in land, in machinery, and in the means of transit. They find these to be the sources of the evils which must be stopped. What does

that mean? It is an expression of opinion that a national bankruptcy would be just and politic, that landed property, machinery, means of transit, indeed the monopoly of property in general should cease to exist. Can it be anything but a sweeping confiscation of property which is contemplated? . . . The petitioners ask for supreme power; in every constituent body throughout the empire capital and accumulated property is to be placed absolutely at the foot of labour. How is it possible to doubt what the result will be? Such a confiscation of property and spoliation of the rich will produce misery, and misery will intensify the desire for spoliation; this will produce desperate struggles which will bring some strong military despot to the surface, who will give some security to the property that will remain. . . ."

Macaulay's argument is transparently clear. Private property was the basis of all civilisation and of all progress; to be sure it also included poverty, but this was a necessary evil, which was fully counterbalanced by the blessings of civilisation. The abolition of private property would considerably increase the evil, and destroy civilisation in the bargain; communism was misery *plus* barbarism, and that was the object of the petitioners who were trying to attain it by means of universal suffrage. How could any civilised and progressive politician be expected under these circumstances to vote in favour of universal suffrage?

Lord John Russell opposed the petition by making use of another argument. He stated:—

"I am aware that it is a doctrine frequently urged, and I perceive dwelt upon in the petition, that every male of a certain age has a right, absolute and inalienable, to elect a representative to take his place among the members in the Commons House of Parliament. I never could understand that indefeasible and inalienable right. It appears to me that that question, like every other in the practical application of politics, is to be settled by the institutions and the laws of the country of which the person is a native. I see no more right that a person 21 years of age has to elect a member of parliament than he has to be a juryman or to exercise judicial functions, as the people used in some

of the republics of antiquity. These things, as it appears to me, are not matters of right; but if it be for the good of the people at large, if it be conducive to the right government of the State, if it tend to the maintenance of the freedom and welfare of the people that a certain number, defined and limited by a reference to a fixed standard of property, should have the right of electing members of parliament, and if it be disadvantageous to the community at large that suffrage should be universal, then I say that on such a subject the consideration of public good should prevail and that no inalienable right can be quoted against that which the good of the whole demands. And as our society is very complicated and property very unequally divided, it might come that a parliament issued from Universal Suffrage might destroy or shake those institutions which are of the utmost value in holding society together. . . ."

Lord Russell's argument is utilitarian in theory. But whilst Jeremy Bentham used the same theory in support of Universal Suffrage and of democracy in general, Lord Russell, on the other hand, deduced from it the necessity for an oligarchy. The latter held the opinion that only the great patrician families possessed capacity for governing, and must therefore hold a dominant position in the State. For what was the use of equality if it was destructive of national power or the solidity of the State?

Voting upon the petition then proceeded to take place, but it was not clear whether it dealt with Duncombe's proposal to hear the Chartist leaders at the bar of the House or with the adoption or rejection in principle of the People's Charter. To all appearance many members of parliament had the first of these requests in view, whilst others took the petition as a whole into consideration. The result was 287 Noes, 49 Ayes. The Radicals and free traders comprised the minority, and amongst them was Richard Cobden, who represented Stockport in parliament since the elections of 1841.[1]

Feargus O'Connor, however, positively revelled in the enormous numbers of the signatories to the petition, whom he regarded as adherents of Chartism ready for action:

[1] Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates*, 1842.

"We are 4,000,000, aye and more. Never lose sight of the fact that we are 4,000,000 and more. How proud was I to call you 2,000,000 just twelve months ago, when the prison walls separated us, and how doubly proud must I now be to call you 4,800,000!" [1]

This was Catilinarian blustering in the worst sense, and it boded ill for the future. A leader of class warfare, who refuses to weigh the value of the number of his own forces as well as those that are opposing him, is but a leader of lost causes.

[1] *Northern Star*, May 21, 1842.

VII

THE CULMINATION OF CHARTISM

I.—ECONOMIC DISTRESS AND GENERAL STRIKE

THE month of August, 1842, will always be memorable in the annals of Chartism. It was the month in which the movement attained its zenith, it was the month of the general strike in the northern half of Great Britain and of the subordination of the trade unions to political Chartism. The nation was nearing a social cataclysm. The discontent and determination of the working class reached their highest point. Wages sank in spite of all trade unionist effort to keep them up to the level of 1839. The whole trade unionism appeared to the working class to be Sisyphean labour. Chartist speakers were able at that time to declare, without fear of contradiction or disapproval, in public meetings of trade unionists that economic action had proved utterly ineffective, and that the salvation of the people entirely depended on the passing of the Charter into law or on political power.[1] The crisis, so the workers believed, had reached a climax which must precipitate the catastrophe, bringing redemption in its train. Unfavourable reports from the markets caused rejoicings among the working men, whose cry was: "It is hastening the crisis!"[2]

No one ventured to question the descriptions of the distress, and the staggering revelations of the labour of children and women in the mines, which led to Lord Ashley's Mines and Colliers Bill (1842), rendered any social palliation utterly impossible. In the mind of many a student of social problems the harrowing thought arose that industrialism itself might be a

[1] *Northern Star*, August 13, 1842 (leading article).
[2] Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates*, 1842, vol. lxiii., p. 23.

disease indicative of the decline and fall of the nation.[1] Even in commercial circles the opinion began to prevail that " manufactures have failed to become a source of employment." [2] The *Spectator* summed up the position in an article headed, " More factories—more pauperism." An anonymous book, entitled *The Perils of the Nation* (1843), dealing with the industrial conditions, which were supposed to polarise society into a handful of magnates and masses of factory slaves, made a deep impression, particularly upon the leaders of the religious movements. And Gladstone, as vice-president of the Board of Trade, when speaking on the income-tax, frankly declared: " It is one of the most melancholy features in the social state of this country that we see beyond the possibility of denial that while there is at this moment a decrease in the consuming powers of the people, an increase of privation and distress of the labouring and operative classes, there is at the same time an enormous accumulation of wealth in the upper classes, a constant increase of capital." [3] Finally, the Anti-Corn Law agitators redoubled their activities and roused the people to the miseries brought about by the taxes on bread.[4] A gloomy social atmosphere was created, which lasted for several years and in which Thomas Hood wrote " The Song of the Shirt," Elizabeth Barrett Browning " The Cry of the Children," Carlyle *Past and Present*, Dickens the Christmas books, Disraeli *Sybil*. There were many who believed England to be on the brink of a social revolution, whilst others hoped for a moral regeneration through Christianity.

In the midst of this general feeling of despair the hope of securing redemption by means of a general strike was once more revived. Towards the end of July, 1842, the working men of Ashton, Stalybridge, and Hyde called meetings in order to deliberate on the state of affairs. Most of the speakers recom-

[1] Charles Bray, Introduction to Mary Hennell's *Outline of Social Systems*, 1844.

[2] *Northern Star*, September 9, 1843.

[3] Hansard's *Parl. Debates*, third series, vol. lxvi., February 14, 1843, p. 480, and R. B. Seeley, *Perils of the Nation*, p. ix.

[4] W. G. Ward, *Ideal of a Christian Church*, 1844, pp. 27-30. Kingsley, *Letters and Memories*, vol. i., p. 121.

mended a stoppage of work, first of all to prevent any further lowering of wages and then to raise wages again to the level of the year 1839.[1] On August 4 the operatives of Stalybridge joined the strike, and with cheers for the Charter, O'Connor, and the *Northern Star* they marched to Ashton and caused their comrades to join the strike. Marching from place to place they stopped the work of the factories everywhere; the number of the workers on the march grew to form a huge procession, which on August 9 converged upon Manchester. Outside the town they were met by the soldiers commanded by Colonel Wemyss, the successor and friend of Sir Charles Napier. The troops were also accompanied by a magistrate entrusted with the task of reading the Riot Act in case of need. The procession entered Manchester after conversations had been held between Colonel Wemyss and the leaders of the demonstration, who assumed all responsibility for the maintenance of public peace. Here it broke up into groups, proceeding from factory to factory, in order to induce the operatives to take part in the strike. In most cases the operatives willingly joined the strike. Force and intimidation were hardly necessary in Manchester. From Manchester as a centre the strike radiated outwards in all directions, embracing Lancashire, Yorkshire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, the Potteries, and extended into Wales. At the

[1] Richard Pilling was the organiser of this strike movement. He was born in 1800, the son of a handloom-weaver, and followed his father's trade. He took part in the Peterloo demonstration and became a Radical from that time onward. The handloom was destroyed by the power loom. In 1833 Pilling entered the factory, which he hated from the bottom of his heart. He joined the ten-hour movement, read Cobbett, Sadler, and Oastler, became a trade union agitator and Chartist, and lost his berth in consequence in 1840. In 1841 he obtained work at Ashton, where a successive drop in wages reduced the weekly earnings of an operative to the sum of 7s. In 1842, when a further drop in wages was proposed, he organised strikes in Stalybridge and Ashton, which spread over the whole district and developed into a general strike. In May, 1848, he became a member of the Chartist National Assembly which met in London. On this occasion he related that in August, 1842, the strike funds amounted altogether to only 20s. (*Northern Star*, May 13, 1848).

same time the Scotch miners went on strike. Even in London nocturnal meetings were held by the Chartists in Lincoln's Inn Fields to prepare for the fight. In the second week of August Benbow's dream seemed to be coming true. The boilers grew cold, furnaces were blown out, power looms ceased humming, mines were deserted, factory bells were silent—every wheel stood still.

It was not everywhere, however, that the working men's holiday started so peacefully as at Manchester. In many districts men willing to work were dragged by force away from the workshops, the windows and doors of factories were smashed in, the plugs of boilers were unscrewed, and manufacturers who offered resistance were overcome by physical force. On the whole, violence was the exception. Plundering, however, did not take place anywhere and no property was wantonly destroyed. Starving operatives, in a state of civil war, poverty-stricken insurgents of the working class remained for a whole week in possession of the richest centre of the textile industry without laying hands on the smallest article of value. It was with expressions of admiration that the leading newspapers laid stress upon this circumstance.[1]

Conflicts between the strikers and the soldiers occurred at Preston and Blackburn, where six workmen in all were killed and several wounded.

A few days after the commencement of the strike the question of wages passed into the background. The idea was mooted that the same exertion that was necessary for obtaining higher wages would be sufficient to secure the Charter. And when the Charter was won, the scale of wages would not only improve, but would be protected and secured, whilst a successful strike in the best of cases could only be of a temporary nature. The working men argued on the following lines: "Even supposing that we obtain an improvement in the scale of wages, what means are then at our disposal for retaining this improvement and securing

[1] *Morning Chronicle*, September 27, 1842; *Examiner*, August 20, 1842, which quotes the *Times*, the *Manchester Times*, etc., with reference to this point.

facilities for further action? Our trade unions have failed us. We have spent thousands of pounds for trade unionist purposes, and yet wages continue to fall. But if we obtain the Charter we shall be in possession of political power, with which we should be able to protect the fruits of our labour. Why then should the general strike be restricted to the question of wages?"

This was the opinion of the majority. To be sure, there were speakers at the meetings who opposed any mixing up of politics with the strike. The views of this minority were as follows: "So long as we restrict ourselves to the question of wages we shall possess the sympathy of many of the middle class and of all the friends of labour. We need this sympathy, for we shall not be in a position to protract the strike owing to our lack of funds. But if we make the Charter the main plank in our programme, we shall come into opposition with the Whigs and the Tories and all who are hostile to universal suffrage."

In the heat of the struggle the political and revolutionary idea gained the upper hand over the purely industrial view.

On August 11 and 12 the delegates of the trades of Manchester met in the Carpenters' Hall, and the following resolution was passed after a thorough review of the situation:—

"The trades pledge themselves not to sanction any illegal proceedings. They deprecate the late and present conduct of the employers who are reducing wages and by these means deprive the labourer of the means of subsistence and destroy the home trade; but at the same time we condemn all violence and destruction of property. We are also of opinion that until class legislation is entirely destroyed and the principle of united labour established, the labourer will not be in a position to enjoy the full fruit of his labours. It is the opinion of this meeting that the People's Charters contain the elements of justice and prosperity, and we pledge ourselves never to relinquish our demands until that demand becomes the law of the land."

This resolution of the leaders of the trades at Manchester

allows of no misunderstanding; it demands democracy and socialism; it declares for the People's Charter and for united or collective production.

On August 12 they issued the following appeal, which was printed in large red type and brought to the notice of the working men of Manchester by being placarded on the walls:—

"Justice, Peace, Law and Order!

"We, the delegates of all the various trades, having been duly and legally elected by our various trades, have again met in solemn conference, empowered by our constituents to watch over and to guard the interests of the people, do most earnestly implore you not to be led astray by the machinations of your enemies, but remain firm in your purpose to uphold your just rights, as set forth in the Carpenters' Hall on the 11th and 12th inst. We call upon you to be prompt in the election of your delegates to the great Delegate Conference which will be held on Monday, August 15.

"We most solemnly pledge ourselves to persevere in our exertions until we achieve the complete emancipation of our brethren of the working classes from the thraldom of monopoly and class legislation by the legal establishment of the People's Charter. The trades of Great Britain carried the Reform Bill. The trades of Great Britain shall carry the Charter."

On August 15 over 100 delegates from Lancashire and Yorkshire met at the large conference. Their mandates were examined with the utmost strictness, and only those were considered valid which were drawn up in the prescribed form by recognised trade organisations. Outside the hall of the conference thousands of workmen held meetings, but were dispersed by military patrols. The delegates sat until August 16, and were interrupted in their deliberations by the magistrates. The main subject of discussion was the question whether the general strike should retain its original character as a matter of wages or whether it should be transformed into a fight for the Charter. Most of the delegates held limited mandates; only nineteen were instructed to vote with the majority in the question between wages and the Charter. The great majority of the speakers were in favour of the Charter,

but there was very little deliberation devoted to the means for carrying out the general strike. The most ardent and eloquent of the speakers declared for the Charter; a calm consideration of the general strike as a political weapon was rendered impossible not only by the excitement of the conflicts, but also by the pressure which the authorities exerted on the workers by the display of military force. The conference of the delegates was a replica of the general Convention of 1839. The belief in the power of universal enthusiasm proved stronger than any references to the necessity for long preparations. Two resolutions were proposed: one for keeping the wages question to the fore, the other for transforming the general strike into a fight for the Charter. Only seven delegates voted for maintaining the wages question of the general strike, whilst 58+19 voted for transforming the general strike into a national fight for the Charter. The 19 were the delegates already referred to, who had been instructed to vote with the majority.

Immediately after the adoption of the Chartist resolution the chairman of the conference issued the following appeal:—

"To the Trades of Manchester and surrounding districts.

'We hasten to lay before you the paramount importance of the day's proceedings. The delegates from the surrounding districts have been more numerous at this day's meeting than they were at yesterday's; and the spirit of determination manifested for the people's rights has increased every hour. In consequence of the unjust and unconstitutional interference of the magistrates our proceedings were abruptly brought to a close by their dispersing the meeting, but not until in their very teeth we passed the following resolution:

"'The delegates in public meeting assembled do recommend to the various constituencies which we represent to adopt all legal means to carry into effect the People's Charter. And further we recommend that delegates be sent to the whole of the country to endeavour to obtain the co-operation of the middle and working classes in carrying out the resolution of ceasing labour until the Charter be the law of the land.'

"Englishmen! Legally determine to maintain the peace

and the well-being of the country, and show, by the strict adherence to our resolutions, that we are your representatives.

" ALEXANDER HUTCHINSON.
" CHARLES STUART.

" Manchester, *August* 16, 1842."

The general strike, the excitement it involved, and the disturbance of the public peace were not confined to Lancashire and Yorkshire. At the same time many miners in Scotland went on strike, and likewise in Staffordshire, where Thomas Cooper made a tour for the purpose of agitation. In the latter district serious disturbances broke out after one of Cooper's speeches, and were accompanied by the destruction of property and by incendiarism. His speeches he later summarised in the following stanzas :—

" Slaves, toil no more ! Why delve, and moil, and pine,
To glut the tyrant-forgers of your chain ?
Slaves, toil no more ! Up from the midnight mine,
Summon your swarthy thousands to the plain ;
Beneath the bright sun marshalled, swell the strain
Of liberty ; and while the lordlings view
Your banded hosts, with stricken heart and brain,—
Shout as one man, ' Toil we no more renew,
Until the Many cease their slavery to the Few !
We'll crouch, and toil, and weave, no more—to weep ! '
Exclaim your brothers from the weary loom :—
Yea, now they swear with one resolve dread, deep—
' We'll toil no more—to win a pauper's doom ! '
And, while the millions swear, fell Famine's gloom
Spreads from their haggard faces, like a cloud,
Big with the fear and darkness of the tomb :—
How, 'neath its terrors, are the tyrants bowed !
Slaves, toil no more—to starve ! Go forth and tame
the Proud ! "[1]

In the meantime a monument in commemoration of Henry Hunt was to be unveiled in Manchester on August 16, 1842, on the anniversary of Peterloo. For months preparations had

[1] Thomas Cooper, *Purgatory of Suicides*, 1845.

been made for this event. The Chartist organisations had elected delegates for this purpose, who intended to utilise this opportunity to deliberate on the state of the agitation, and especially on the dissensions which had arisen in the movement. The delegates were more than forty in number and met in Manchester on August 16. They were amazed at the appearance of the " town of the high chimneys." The stoppage of work was universal. " Not a single mill at work ! " exclaimed John Campbell, the secretary of the N.C.A. " Something must come out of this, and something serious too ! " [1]

On August 17 the Chartist delegates met secretly in a chapel. The original agenda of the conference, viz., the unveiling of the monument to Hunt and the dissensions in the movement, were dropped in order to discuss the new trade unionist struggle for the Charter. Most of the delegates were eager for an immediate mobilisation of the people. The declaration of the conference of the trades' delegates aroused indescribable enthusiasm among the Chartists.[2] They fully believed that " the time had come for trying, successfully, to paralyse the government." [3]

After the delegates had handed in their reports, M'Douall rose and proposed on behalf of the committee that the conference should identify itself with the resolutions of the trades, and that the general strike should be encouraged until the Charter had passed into law. Cooper seconded the motion, since the general strike could not fail to lead to a national struggle. A peaceful general strike was an impossibility, for the forces of the government would make an attempt to suppress and to persecute the strikers, and this could only be countered by the armed opposition of the people. The Chartists must now mobilise the masses of the people and render them irresistible. Several delegates spoke to the same effect as Cooper, thanking him for having expressed their secret thoughts. O'Connor opposed the motion . . . " We are not met here to talk about fighting. We are met to consider and approve the resolution of the trades."

[1] Thomas Cooper, *Life*, p. 206.
[2] Bronterre O'Brien in *British Statesman*, August 20, 1842.
[3] Thomas Cooper, *Life*, p. 208.

William Hill, the editor of the *Northern Star*, spoke against both Cooper and O'Connor :—

" I wonder that so a clear an intellect as Cooper's should dream of fighting. Fighting !—the people have nothing to fight with, and would be mown down by artillery if they attempted to fight. The strike has originated with the Anti-Corn Law League,[1] and we should simply be their tools if we helped to extend or prolong the strike. It could only spread disaster and suffering. I move an amendment that we entirely disapprove of it."

He was followed by Richard Otley, of Sheffield :—

" How could poor, starving weavers be expected to fight ? If we endeavoured to form battalions for fighting, the people would need food and clothing—they would need arms and powder and shot ; they would very likely have to bivouac in the fields—anyhow could poor weavers be expected to do that ? It would kill them in a few days."

Even Harney, our old friend of the *London Democrat*, the admirer of Marat, the friend of Major Beniowski, expressed himself against the policy of physical force.

When the vote was taken Hill's amendment received only six votes. The conference therefore resolved to range itself completely on the side of the trades, and passed the following resolution :—

" Whilst the Chartist body did not originate the present cessation from labour, the conference of delegates from various parts of England express their deep sympathy with their constituents, the working men now on strike, and that we strongly approve the extension and continuance of the present struggle till the People's Charter becomes a legislative enactment, and decide forthwith to issue an address to that effect, and pledge ourselves on our return to our respective localities to give a proper direction to the people's efforts."

[1] It was customary for Hill to ascribe everything to the free trade agitation ; he saw its influence everywhere, just as Cobden ascribed all his difficulties to the action of the Chartists and their alleged aristocratic supporters.

The conference issued not merely one address but two; one was couched in fairly moderate language and signed by the executive; the other was anonymous and was drawn up on the lines of the policy of physical force and insurrection.

The passing of the resolution and the issue of the addresses brought the action of the Chartist leaders to a close.

Was the position they adopted the right one? Does it justify the conclusion that the Chartist leaders understood the significance of the situation?

Let us examine the state of affairs. The industrial and commercial centres of the Midlands and the North of England were in a state of insurrection; Scotland, Wales, and London could easily be mobilised, no longer for purely trade unionist purposes, but in support of the Chartist programme. The trade unions, the operatives, the working men of the whole country followed the standard of Chartism. What was, under these circumstances, O'Connor's duty and that of his lieutenants? Their duty was to take over the supreme command. How often had not O'Connor said that he was ready to conquer or to die? And could he hope for any more favourable opportunity of turning words into deeds? The Midlands and North of England, Scotland, and Wales were waiting for their leader's word of command. But what did the leader do? Absolutely nothing. He left all initiative to the people and returned to London. The throwing down of his weapons can only be interpreted as indicating that he foresaw the failure of the general strike. In this case it was clearly his duty to have supported Hill's resolution. There were only two alternatives: either Cooper was right or Hill. And since he did not share Cooper's views, it was his duty as leader to tell the people in explicit terms that they should adhere strictly to the question of wages, as they were not ready for an insurrection. And he should also have communed with himself and avowed that the whole policy of insurrection was a mistaken policy; for, if it was impotent in the case of a national rising of the working men, it must inevitably be completely nugatory in the case of a partial rising.

In the fourth week of August, 1842, the strike was obviously on the wane. Abandoned by their leaders, who dispersed; persecuted by the authorities, who made wholesale arrests; oppressed by misery, which was rendered more acute by the strike, the workmen gradually returned to the factories, but even at the end of September the strike still possessed a partial character. The whole moral advantage of the strike fell to the share of the Anti-Corn Law League, for many Whigs and Tories could no longer resist the conclusion that the people must be afforded cheaper means of subsistence in order to render it possible for them to make both ends meet with the low scale of wages.

The climax of Chartism was the commencement of the victorious career of free trade, but not of Chartism. Three and a half years later the Tory government introduced the Bill for the abolition of the Corn Laws, and on this occasion Sir James Graham, the Home Secretary, remarked:—

"We had the painful and lamentable experience of 1842—a year of the greatest distress, and now that it is passed, I may say, of the utmost danger. What were the circumstances of 1842? Allow me just to glance at them. We had in this metropolis, at midnight, Chartist meetings assembled in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Immense masses of people, greatly discontented and acting in a spirit dangerous to the public peace. . . . What was the condition of Lancashire? . . . All the machinery was stopped. . . . It was my painful duty to consult with the Horse Guards almost daily as to the precautions that were necessary for the maintenance of the public peace. For some time troops were continually called on, in different parts of the manufacturing districts, to maintain public tranquillity. . . . For three months the anxiety which I and my colleagues experienced was greater than we ever felt before with reference to public affairs. . . ."[1]

The ministers who had been converted to free trade justified in this manner the change of their opinion.

[1] Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates*, February, 1846, vol. 83, p. 718 and *sqq.*

This was the state of affairs in August, September, and October, 1842, and O'Connor and his lieutenants left the working men in the lurch. O'Connor went to London to elaborate the plans for his so-called agrarian reform. M'Douall took to flight, and the remainder also did nothing, whilst O'Brien and Lovett were cut off from the working classes and were unable to express any effective criticism in opposition to O'Connor.

2.—TRIALS AND DISORGANISATION

Wholesale arrests on a larger scale than during the blackest period of the Whig government followed closely upon the retreat of the Chartist leaders and the failure of the strike. Arrest or arraignment was the lot of every leader or speaker among the Chartists or trade unionists, and of every working man suspected of complicity in the strike movement. An exact list of arrested men cannot be drawn up owing to the disorganisation of the Chartist press.

An estimate of 1,500 will not be far from the mark. About 800 were either released after a short space of time or sentenced in the police-courts, whilst 710 were tried at the assizes in York, Lancaster, Stafford, Chester, and Liverpool. The list of accused persons comprised working men differing most widely in age, from youths of 15 years up to an old man of 101 years! In October, 1842, about 651 prisoners appeared before the juries. Of this number only 125 were acquitted; the remainder received sentences of imprisonment varying from a few months up to two years, whilst 79 were sentenced to transportation to the penal settlements in Australia. O'Connor and 58 of his comrades, comprising Hill, Harney, and Cooper, appeared only in March, 1843, before the assizes in Lancaster. By this time the dread of the general strike had been nearly forgotten, and both judges and juries gave milder sentences. Twenty-six of the accused were found not guilty, whilst the remainder received no more than the verdict of guilty; for the Court of Appeal, owing to a flaw in the indictment, quashed the trial, and no further proceedings were taken.[1] With the exception of M'Douall,

[1] Thomas Cooper was not so fortunate. After having been

who had taken to flight, O'Connor's fellow-prisoners comprised all those who had taken part in the Chartist conference of August 16, as well as the trade unionist leader, Richard Pilling, who had started the strike in Stalybridge and Ashton.[1]

O'Connor conducted his defence with great skill, especially by his attack on the witnesses for the Crown, Griffin and Cartledge, former Chartists who had entered the service of the prosecuting authorities.

Pilling's speech in defence was distinguished from all the rest by a particularly impressive description of the misery prevailing among the working men in 1841 and 1842. He drew so harrowing a picture of the moral and domestic misery that followed in the train of the economic distress that he moved the jury and the court of justice to tears. The public prosecutor left the court in order to conceal his emotion.[2] After this speech neither judge nor jury could any longer shut their eyes to the fact that it was only the frightful misery that was responsible for the excesses during the strike, and that on the whole the workmen had displayed much patience and self-control.

Indications of the disorganisation of Chartism became apparent even in the autumn of 1842, that is to say immediately after the collapse of the general strike. The prosecutions delayed the process of disorganisation to some extent, but after the assizes in March, 1843, the number of organised Chartists dropped to three or four thousand.

The circulation of the *Northern Star* steadily diminished, whilst misunderstandings increased daily among the leaders. The remnant of organised Chartism rallied round O'Connor, who embodied the movement. In December, 1842, William Hill, the editor of the *Northern Star*, accused the whole executive of having been corrupted. O'Connor took up the cudgels on behalf of the leaders, and appointed George Julian Harney to be assistant

acquitted, together with the 58 other defendants, he was sentenced to two years' imprisonment on account of his seditious speeches in Staffordshire.

[1] See *supra*, footnote, Part III., p. 141.

[2] *State Trials*, New Series, 1839 to 1843, vol. 4, p. 1097 and *sqq*.

editor. On July 8, 1843, Hill was dismissed and J. Hobson and Harney took over the editorial management.

There was now no end of tale-bearing. It was a crime to associate with a free trader; it was worse than a crime to express praise of Lovett and O'Brien. Treachery was suspected on all sides, and spies were continually on the look out for traitors.[1] The treasury of the National Charter Association was empty. O'Connor became the dispenser of funds, partly out of his own pocket, and partly from the considerable entrance fees and the collections which were made at his meetings. The most unmistakable sign of the apathy which had spread among the working class in the centres of industry was, however, the decision early in 1844 to remove the *Northern Star* to London. In subsequent years the trade unions still utilised the *Northern Star* for their appeals and communications, because it was considered to be the best source of information and the trade unions were still without a press of their own, but their minds were fast moving away from revolutionary experiments to the organisation of prosaic trade societies and co-operative stores.

In the meantime there was no lack of attempts at reorganisation. A conference of thirty delegates was held in Birmingham from September 5 to 8, 1843, in order to discuss a new plan of organisation, which proceeded from O'Connor, with the object of combining Chartism with agrarian reform. The two principal tasks which were now imposed upon the movement were to obtain the Charter and to found agricultural settlements. The delegate Marsden, one of the members of the General Convention of 1839, was present and protested against the attempt to buy land, since such a procedure would imply the recognition of the fact that the ground landlords had a right of possession, which had hitherto been regarded as a mere usurpation. The conference, however, decided in favour of the plan of organisation. A short discussion was also evoked by another point in the plan of organisation by which the lecturers should be appointed by the executive instead of leaving them in the hands of local committees. Marsden was of opinion it should never be forgotten

[1] *Northern Star*, April 27, 1844; December 28, 1844.

that there were two currents in the movement—the physical force and the moral force party. If the executive had to make the appointments of the lecturers, it would only appoint the lecturers who shared the same views as the executive. The conference, however, considered the former system to be prejudicial and voted for the new plan. This plan of organisation could not, however, be put into force, as the Chief Registrar declared it to be illegal.

At the conference held in the following year at Manchester, from April 22 to 26, 45 delegates were present for the purpose of deliberating upon a new plan of organisation. It was kept quite free from any agrarian reform, and its sole object was to consolidate the forces of Chartism. The *Northern Star* belauded this conference because the speeches were short, impartial and free from all irritating personalities. The new plan of organisation was adopted, but the mass of the Chartists kept aloof from the organisation, for their confidence in their leaders had been shattered.

In November, 1844, the editorial and publishing offices of the *Northern Star* were moved to London, where it came in touch with the international revolutionary movement through the political and communist refugees of the Continent. This does not indeed apply to O'Connor, who henceforth not only resisted new ideas, but gradually broke away from his traditions of agrarian revolution and became absorbed in experiments for turning the Chartists into small holders and peasants.

3.—O'CONNOR'S PLAN OF AGRARIAN REFORM

The years 1843 to 1845 signalised the decline of Chartism. Two events contributed especially to this result, viz., the collapse of the general strike of August, 1842, and the failure of the Owenite colony, Queenwood, in the summer of 1845. The first of these events broke the back of the movement in the North of England. Chartism as an ideal was indeed venerated by the people for a long time afterwards, but it remained, so to speak, in the air, because it had proved to be unserviceable as a policy in the

field of operations. The second event deprived the Socialists of their last belief in the possibility of realising their ultimate aim. The most sanguine hopes of the Socialists of Great Britain had been bound up with the Queenwood colony. From 1842 they had watched its progress with eager anticipation. At first everything went swimmingly, so long as funds were in hand; and the *Northern Star* pointed with pride to the progress of Socialist production. When this last refuge of Owenite experiments had fallen to pieces, all belief in Socialism was abandoned.

O'Connor's falling away from agrarian Socialism is clearly revealed in the columns of the *Northern Star*. "In agitation," he explained, "there are three stages, viz. (1) the creation of public opinion; (2) the organisation of this opinion; (3) the direction of this opinion towards definite aims." For years he had worked for agrarian reform, now the time was ripe for organising adherents to agrarian reform. But what shape was this reform to take? O'Connor replied:—

"Deposits to the amount of £207,270 lie in the savings banks of Leeds and its environs. We call upon the depositors to withdraw these deposits and to invest them in one of Owen's communistic colonies."[1]

Four years later he wrote in a similar strain.[2] And again in the early part of 1845 he exclaimed:—

"The land belongs to the people. It is the people's heritage. Kings, princes, lords, and citizens have stolen it from the people. The law of nature is on the side of the people. Usurpation is the work of the rich and powerful."

O'Connor now worked at the realisation of his agrarian plan. The agrarian plan received three titles in succession: (1) Chartist Co-operative Land Society; (2) National Co-operative Land Company; (3) National Land Company. This backsliding from Chartism and socialism to company promoting was completed between 1845 and 1846. In 1847 he already explicitly declared in so many words: "Peasant proprietorship is the best basis of

[1] *Northern Star*, June 16, 1838.
[2] *English Chartist Circular*, 1842, Nos. 68 and 69.

society." [1] And he built upon this basis his Land Reform Joint Stock Company, which drew in and frittered away not less than £100,000 from Chartists, working men, and other reformers.

We can treat the history of these experiments in small holdings in a very brief manner, for it represented only an episode in the process of dissolution of the Chartist and Owenite period. A Chartist conference assembled in London in the fourth week of April, 1845. There were altogether only fifteen delegates present, including the members of the executive. The most important business of the conference was the founding of the Chartist Co-operative Land Society, with the following programme :—

Object : To purchase land on which to locate its members, in order to demonstrate to the working classes of the kingdom, firstly, the value of the land as a means of making them independent of the grinding capitalist ; and, secondly, to show them the necessity of securing the speedy enactment of the People's Charter, which would do for them nationally what the society proposes to do sectionally ; the accomplishment of the political and social emancipation of the enslaved and degraded working classes being the prominent object of the society.

Means : Good arable land may be rented in some of the most fertile parts of the country at the rate of 15s. per acre, and might be bought at 25 years' purchase, that is, £18 15s. per acre. And supposing £5,000 be raised, this sum would purchase 120 acres and locate 60 persons with two acres each, leaving a balance of £2,750 for building cottages, buying stock, etc. These allotments, with dwellings, might be leased for ever to the members of the society, at an annual rental of £5 each. The gross annual rental would thus be £300. The property, if sold at 20 years' purchase, would fetch £6,000, which sum, if expended in a similar manner to the first, would locate 72 persons ; these 72 allotments, sold at the rate of the first, would bring £7,200, and this sum, laid out in the purchase of other land, cottages, stock, etc., would locate 86 persons. This, sold again, would produce, at the original price, £8,600 ; with this capital the society could locate

[1] *The Labourer*, 1847, II., 149 ; *Reports on the National Land Company*, 1848, p. 172.

103 persons. These 103 persons would produce £10,317, and would locate 123 persons. Thus the original capital of £5,000 would more than double itself at the fourth sale; and so in the same ratio, until the tenth sale would produce £37,324, which, if the project be taken up with spirit, might easily be effected in four years, and there would be 1,923 persons located with allotments of two acres. In the space of a few years a vast number of the " surplus labour population " could be placed in happiness and prosperity upon the soil of their native land.[1]

Shares were to be issued in order to raise the sum of £5,000; and a land bank was to be established for the purpose of enabling the members to purchase allotments, to deposit their savings and to obtain loans for trading purposes.

At first O'Connor attempted to register the Land Society as a friendly society, and he assured his readers that the Registrar of Friendly Societies could not refuse to register it; if indeed he dared to refuse to do so he would be called to account. Nevertheless the registrar absolutely refused to register it on the grounds that the Land Society possessed the characteristics of a political society. O'Connor then attempted to bring his society within the range of the Joint Stock Company law, but the cost of registration was relatively high, for the fees for stamps and registering amounted to about £4 for every 100 shareholders, and the enrolment of members in O'Connor's colonising society was surprisingly rapid: from 1846 to the beginning of 1848 not less than 75,000 working men and Chartists joined the society. Every member had to take up on the average three shares of 26s. each and to pay for them by instalments. £96,000 pounds came in up to the early part of 1848! But owing to the fact that the society, which then already bore the name of National Land Company, was only provisionally registered, it possessed no legal status. The Chartists, however, did not trouble much about the illegality of their plan of emancipation and waited for O'Connor's Apocalypse. Violent attacks on the business management of the land reform venture were not lacking. Since there was no legal control and balance-sheets

[1] *Northern Star*, April 26 and May 3, 1845.

were published either in an incomplete form or at irregular intervals, there was ample material for hostile criticism on the part of O'Connor's opponents, among whom Thomas Cooper took a prominent position.[1] Yet the working men continued to stick to their old leader with his many plans, in spite of the fact that the results of his plan of reform were remarkably insignificant. During the two years when the fortunes of the land reform were in a flourishing condition only 230 persons out of the 75,000 shareholders were located on the land. An allotment comprised three acres on an average, and cost £300, including buildings, implements and stock. If it takes two years to locate 230 persons, how many years will be required to locate 75,000 persons? Obviously 652 years. And if an allotment costs £300, how much will 75,000 allotments cost? Obviously 22·5 million pounds sterling!

The Utopian character of O'Connor's plan could have been demonstrated by simple multiplication and division. Nevertheless the working men could not be induced to probe into O'Connor's plan. In June, 1848, parliament appointed a select committee to examine into the affairs of the National Land Company. O'Connor was elected a member of the committee. The investigation revealed a confused and extremely imperfect state of the account books, and two book-keepers and mathematicians appointed by the committee had to take a great amount of trouble and to make lengthy investigations before they could give a general outline of the state of the business. The committee adopted the following resolution as its final finding :—

"The books of proceeding of the National Land Company as well as the accounts of the company have been most imperfectly kept, and the original balance-sheets have been destroyed, and only three of them (from the end of September, 1847, to the end of March, 1848) have been produced; but Mr. F. O'Connor having expressed an opinion that an impression had gone abroad that the moneys subscribed by the National Land Company had been applied to his own benefit, this committee are clearly of opinion that, although the accounts have not been kept with strict

[1] *Northern Star*, June 20, 1846.

regularity, yet the irregularity has been against Mr. O'Connor's interests, instead of in his favour, and that it appears there is due to Mr. O'Connor the sum of between £3,298 and £3,400. Considering that the company appears to have been carried on *bona fide*, it is the opinion of the committee that powers might be granted to the parties concerned to wind up the concern and to relieve them from the penalties to which they might have incautiously exposed themselves."[1]

The publication of these reports brought O'Connor's career to an end. The spell was broken, but a contributory cause to this result was the last London demonstration of April 10, 1848, to which we shall soon turn our attention, after making our acquaintance with some of the new men who entered the movement about this period.

4.—NEW LEADERS

During the last phase of Chartism several men came into notice who deserve a closer acquaintance. The most prominent among them was Ernest Charles Jones (1819-1869), born of British parentage in Berlin and educated in Lüneburg and London. After having been called to the Bar, he, in 1845, joined the Chartist movement. He was essentially a democratic poet and emotional social reformer. At first he came under the influence of O'Connor, was his co-editor of *The Labourer* and *Northern Star*. Since about 1850 to 1855 he learned a good deal from Karl Marx, unfortunately at a time when the latter, smarting under the defeat of the German and French revolutions of 1848, was too embittered to be able to think impartially. This influence is particularly noticeable in Jones's *Notes to the People* (1850-51) and in the first years of his *People's Paper*. And Jones himself, after his two years' prison (1848-50), to which he had been condemned in July, 1848, on account of his insurrectionary agitation, was in the same mood as his German friend. His political and social reform writings are of no importance. On the other hand, among his poems there are some of abiding value. The following is one of the best :—

[1] *Reports on the National Land Company, VI. Report*, 1848.

THE SONG OF THE LOWER CLASSES.

1.

" We plough and sow—we're so very, very low
That we delve in the dirty clay
Till we bless the plain—with the golden grain,
And the vale with fragrant hay.
Our place we know—we're so very low
'Tis down at the landlord's feet,
We're not too low—the bread to grow,
But too low the bread to eat.

2.

" Down, down we go—we're so very, very low,
To the hell of deep-sunk mines,
But we gather the proudest gems that glow
When the crown of the despot shines.
And whenever he lacks—upon our backs
Fresh loads he deigns to lay :
We're far too low to vote the tax,
But not too low to pay.

3.

" We're low, we're low—mere rabble, we know,
But at our plastic power,
The mould at the lordling's feet will grow
Into palace and church and tower—
Then prostrate fall—in the rich men's hall
And cringe at the rich man's door :
We're not too low to build the wall,
But too low to tread the floor.

4.

" We're low—we're low—we're very, very low,
Yet from our fingers glide
The silken flow—and the robes that glow
Round the limbs of the sons of pride.
And what we get—and what we give
We know, and we know our share :
We're not too low the cloth to weave,
But too low the cloth to wear."

A man of a different mentality was George Jacob Holyoake (1817—1906)—logical, rationalist, and essentially Liberal. He was rather an unattached Chartist, but he exercised some influence on the movement by his lectures and writings. He entered the Chartist ranks on the decline of Owenism and brought with him the idea of class solidarity and the conviction of the necessity for the working classes to co-operate with the Liberal party. He was one of the few working class leaders who saw that the ideas underlying Chartism were much too advanced for a nation which was just emerging from the domination of the landed interests. He felt that long years of triumphant Liberalism were required to prepare the minds of the people for democracy. Holyoake was acquainted with all the leading political refugees who found asylum in London, except with Marx and Engels.

The third man worth mentioning is Samuel Kydd ("Alfred"), who, in 1857, published a *History of the Factory Movement*. He was a Scotch shoemaker, who from 1846 onwards became prominent as a lecturer and writer. After the extinction of Chartism he studied law and was called to the Bar.

VIII

THE FINAL FLICKER AND EXTINCTION

I.—PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS OF 1847

From 1843 to 1847 Chartism only showed slight signs of life, sometimes indeed barely perceptible. In 1844 O'Connor consoled his adherents and expressed the opinion that "Chartism is not dead, but sleeping."[1] And its sleep lasted until the middle of 1847, but it was the French February revolution that set it once again upon its legs.[2] Two events contributed to revive it in the year 1847, viz., in the first place, the parliamentary elections of the summer of 1847, which followed the victory of the free trade agitation, and, secondly, the agitation of the continental refugees in London.

In 1846 the Conservative leader, Sir Robert Peel, was converted to free trade, and obtained a majority in parliament for his new commercial policy. Strange to say, Peel's conversion was hailed as a wise, statesmanlike act by O'Connor and the *Northern Star*, which had always opposed the Anti-Corn Law League down to the end of 1845. O'Connor merely remarked that "free trade without free representation is sure to lead to revolution."[3] Peel's conversion demoralised the Conservative party, which had been in power since 1841; parliament was dissolved and new elections followed in July and August, 1847. The Chartists put forward several candidates, but they were only nominated, with the exception of O'Connor in Nottingham and Ernest Jones in Halifax. O'Connor formed an alliance with the

[1] *Northern Star*, July 27, 1844.

[2] *Ibid.*, April 1 and September 9, 1848.

[3] *Northern Star*, September 19, 1846. (This is an interesting number; it contains a long account by O'Connor on the History of Chartism from 1836 to 1846.)

Conservatives in Nottingham and was elected, to the surprise of all.

The only other noteworthy candidate was George Julian Harney. Harney managed to be nominated at Tiverton in opposition to Lord Palmerston. From 1830 Palmerston had been regarded as the enemy of all freedom, more especially of oppressed nations, and as the servant of the Tsar. Harney now went down to his constituency and became a candidate in order to denounce Palmerston on the hustings, where all the candidates delivered their election addresses on the day of nomination. He spoke with much eloquence. Palmerston followed him in a speech of three hours' duration, taking Harney very seriously. When the vote was taken by show of hands, Harney obtained a majority, but he did not go to the polls, so that Palmerston was finally elected.

During these elections Robert Owen ran as a candidate for Marylebone with a programme of political reform. He was, however, only a nomination candidate, and received a considerable number of votes. One of Owen's political demands at this election was the substitution of a militia for the standing army. He was no anti-militarist, and in this he followed the earlier British Socialists and social reformers, like Sir Thomas More, Gerard Winstanley, and Thomas Spence. The only prominent anti-militarist was William Godwin ; but he was an anarchist, who believed that reason was the only legitimate and effective weapon ; and, therefore, condemned all force and struggle, either of individuals or classes and nations.

2.—CHARTISM AND THE INTERNATIONALS

In September, 1844, the idea arose among the German, Polish, and Italian refugees in London of founding a society to familiarise the English public with their aspirations. The society was started and was called the Society of Fraternal Democrats. Their place of meeting was at the German Communist Working Men's Club, which at that time held its meetings in Drury Lane. In 1845, at the request of Karl Schapper and the Pole, Louis Oborski, William Lovett drew up an appeal to the

Chartists to join the Fraternal Democrats. Harney, Jones, Cooper and others joined the society, and the *Northern Star* published at regular intervals accounts of its activity, giving full reports of the lectures that were delivered at its meetings. It used to celebrate the anniversaries of the French revolution and of the Polish insurrections, and discussions were held on European politics. The reports of these meetings introduced the Chartists into international politics, and they became a section of the revolutionary movement if Europe. Mazzini was active in a similar direction, but he never entered into any intimate relations with the Chartists who rallied round the *Northern Star*. Karl Schapper, a German revolutionary, was held in great esteem by the Chartists. Friedrich Engels stood in high favour with the intellectual section of the Chartists. From 1843 he was acquainted with the editors of the *Northern Star*. From 1845 he wrote for the paper at intervals about German affairs. In the summer of 1846 we read for the first time of the relations between Karl Marx and the Chartists. O'Connor had fought an unsuccessful by-election in Nottingham, whereupon the German Communists, living as refugees in Belgium, instructed Marx, Engels, and Gigot to congratulate the Chartist leader on his fight. The writers praised the attitude of the *Northern Star* to British politics; they told the British workmen that the real battle was between capital and labour, between the middle and the working classes, and that O'Connor and his organ fully appreciated these facts. The letter is dated Brussels, July 17, 1846, and published in the *Northern Star* of July 25. In November, 1847, Marx and Engels came to London to attend the Congress of the Communists, and were commissioned to draw up the famous *Communist Manifesto*. At the same date a Chartist public meeting was held to commemorate the anniversary of the Polish insurrection of 1830. Among the speakers were Harney, Jones, Marx, Engels, and Kydd. When the Polish business had been disposed of, the Fraternal Democrats directed their attention to working class politics. In a speech, delivered in German, Marx declared :—

"I have been sent by the Brussels Democrats to speak with

the Democrats of London to call on them to cause to be holden *a Congress of Nations*—a Congress of working men, to establish liberty all over the world. The middle classes, the free traders, held a congress in Brussels, but their fraternity was one-sided, and the moment they found that such congresses were likely to benefit the working men, that moment their fraternity would cease and dissolve. The Democrats of Belgium and the Chartists of England were the real Democrats, and the moment they carried the six points of their Charter the road to liberty would be opened for the world. Effect this grand object, you workmen of England, and you will be hailed as the saviours of the whole human race."[1]

By means of these inter-relations the readers of the Chartist newspapers were swept into the current of the European revolutionary tide and into the events of 1848.

At the same time the Chartists declared solidly in favour of the Irish revolutionists. Chartist speakers were sent to Dublin, and in return Irishmen appeared at Chartist meetings and demonstrations.

A revolutionary International was in the course of formation. It was owing to this state of feeling that the *Northern Star* forgot all previous experience and wrote on January 1, 1848 :—" Moral force is moral humbug, unless there is physical force behind it." The Chartists understood the hint, and the old game of drilling and buying weapons began again in secret. The enthusiasm of the Chartists, wrote the *Times* of March 28, grew to the same dimensions and heat as in the years 1839 and 1842.

Whilst these preparations were in progress news came of the outbreak of the French revolution in February, 1848. A wave of feverish enthusiasm swept the ranks of the working men. Meetings and demonstrations were held all over the country. None of the halls in London were large enough to hold the masses who wished to attend the meetings. Crowds assembled in the open air on Clerkenwell Green, Kennington Common, and in Trafalgar Square, etc., to hear the Chartist leaders and to adopt their proposals. Serious breaches of the peace occurred

[1] *Northern Star* December 4, 1847.

in the provinces; in Glasgow the unemployed marched through the streets shouting, "Bread or revolution!" In Manchester crowds surrounded the workhouse and demanded the liberation of the inmates. In Bridgeton the soldiers fired on the working men and shot down several of them. Naturally, plenty of the usual Addresses to the French people were forthcoming. Harney and W. J. Linton [1] took Addresses over to Paris.

For the purpose of rallying the Chartists and estimating their strength, the committee of the National Charter Association resolved to present a petition to parliament for the introduction of the Charter and to get it widely signed. A National Convention had to be convoked, on the old lines, in order to superintend and to bring in the petition. But the government also adopted its former system of employing spies, concentrating soldiers, and swearing in special constables.

3.—THE PETITION AND APRIL 10, 1848

On April 1 O'Connor published the following appeal to the Chartists:—

"Onward, and we conquer,
Backward, and we fall!
The People's Charter and No Surrender!

"Old Guards! As I believe in my soul that the time has now arrived when we are entitled to the fruits of our thirteen years' labour, I call upon you to perform that duty which your own order, 'the fustian jackets, the blistered hands and unshorn chins,' expect from your hands. It is impossible, as it would be immoral, that the labouring classes of England, the most oppressed of any country in the world, should allow the present manifestation of their order throughout the world to pass unnoticed or unimproved by them. . . . I would rather die than give up one particle of the Charter. Still, remember that our movement

[1] Linton was born in London in 1812. He was well known as a wood-engraver and a poet. His wife was Lynn Linton, the authoress of *Joshua Davidson*. He had taken part in the Chartist agitation since 1838. Walter Crane, the painter and socialist, was an apprentice in Linton's workshop.

is a labour movement, originated in the first instance by the fustian jackets, the blistered hands and the unshorn chins. Further, I would not give a fig for the Charter if we were not prepared with a solid, social system to take the place of the artificial one which we mean to destroy ; and it was good that we did not succeed earlier with the Charter, before we were ready with the new social system. Look at France ; the great trouble of the Provisional Government is the organisation of labour. And so will it be in Prussia, where the people are rejoicing over their victory over Frederick Wilhelm IV., while the latter is really laying the foundation for a stronger military power. But in addition to the Charter we have land reform, which will give bread to the working men when the Charter is carried. The Charter and the Land ! Those are our objects. Protect us in our work, People of England ! Sign the Petition ! "

At the same time O'Connor drew up a constitution of a peasant and democratic republic. He secretly hoped to become the first president of the republic. He told the Chartists that his uncle, Arthur O'Connor, who had been living in exile in Paris for fifty years, had an excellent prospect of being made president of the French republic, and that one of his brothers was prime minister of a South American republic.

There is hardly an article or a speech by O'Connor in the whole of the *Northern Star* that is so characteristic of his mode of thought or of his personal attributes as his manifesto of April 1, 1848, which has just been quoted. The date is, however, ominous.

On April 3, 42 Chartist delegates to the Convention assembled in an Owenite hall in John Street, Tottenham Court Road, for the purpose of considering the state of affairs and of taking charge of the petition which was to be taken and submitted to parliament by a vast procession on April 10. The petition was similar to the petition of 1842. It contained the following principles :

" Labour is the source of all wealth. The people are the source of all political power. The worker has the right to the produce of his labour. Taxation without parliamentary representation is tyranny. The resources and economic means

of a country are best developed and administered most advantageously by means of laws which are made by the representatives of the working and the industrious classes. In recognition of these principles the Chartists demand that the People's Charter should become the law of the land."[1]

The members of the Convention, comprising Ernest Jones, George Julian Harney, and Bronterre O'Brien, reported on the situation and the state of feeling of the people. They were of opinion, with very few exceptions, that the people were ready to fight. The old watchword, " Peacefully if we may—forcibly if we must," resounded in nearly all the speeches. They were carried away again by violent talk ; all kinds of weapons were bought in secret, but not in accordance with any systematic plan ; and plots were hatched.

On April 7 the government published a proclamation, informing the public that the Convention was an illegally constituted body and issuing a warning against any participation in the procession of April 10. And the government did not let the matter drop. It turned London into an armed camp. The garrisons of the south of England were brought to London and the marines of the Home Fleet were kept in readiness. Extensive military preparations were made for the protection of the Tower and the Bank of England. Great numbers of special constables were in addition sworn in, among them being William E. Gladstone and Louis Napoleon. The published numbers of the strength of the troops, the police, and the special constables are extraordinarily high. In general, the figures of the military and police and of the Chartists and their friends on April 10, 1848, cannot be accepted with any confidence. Hope, fear, and a feverish imagination rendered it quite impossible for anyone to think soberly or to speak or write with any approach to exactitude.

The Convention sat daily, listened to speeches, and received the petition sheets with the signatures. No attempt, however, was made to examine and verify them or to count their number. Thus the fateful day, April 10, arrived. Many shops were shut.

[1] *Northern Star*, April 1, 1848 ; Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates*, third series, vol. 106, pp. 1268 and *sqq*.

Special constables stood at the doors of most of the houses. Bodies of police guarded the bridges over the Thames leading to the Houses of Parliament; the soldiers stood under arms in the barracks or at the guns in the environs of the south of London. At nine o'clock in the morning the Convention in John Street opened its proceedings. Christopher Doyle, a member of the committee, read out a communication from the Chief Commissioner of the police, in which attention was drawn to the illegality of the intended procession to the Houses of Parliament. In the discussion that followed, O'Connor spoke, justifying the extensive military preparations of the government as being due to the violent speeches of the members of the Convention; finally he stated he had heard from a trustworthy source that the police and the soldiers had received strict orders to fire on the Chartist leaders. At 10 o'clock the delegates left the council room and marched at the head of the procession. A richly-decorated wagon, drawn by four horses, was reserved for the petition. This was followed by a decorated carriage, drawn by six horses, in which the members of the committee of the National Charter Association sat. The procession passed through Tottenham Court road on their way to No. 144, Holborn, the office of the National Land Company, where the petition was kept. Thence the procession proceeded in a south-easterly direction to Blackfriars Bridge, in order to reach the meeting on Kennington Common. On the way it was joined by groups of demonstrators from the north and east, in many cases with bands and banners. The road was lined by enormous crowds. Finally the procession reached the appointed place of meeting. The exact number of the demonstrators on Kennington Common cannot be determined; the statements on this point vary enormously. Before the meeting could begin the Commissioner of Police, who was stationed in a public-house close by, sent for O'Connor and McGrath, a member of the committee, and told them the government had no objection to the meeting being held, but that under no circumstances would a procession be allowed to go to the Houses of Parliament. Even a semblance of intimidating parliament was a punishable offence; and the

government would hold O'Connor personally responsible. O'Connor and McGrath gave way and promised to break up the procession at the close of the meeting. In the meantime the rumour spread among the demonstrators that their leader had been arrested. Soon, however, he appeared in their midst and was greeted with continuous and stormy applause. But O'Connor was by no means at his ease. Ever since 1837 he had told the people he would knock at the gates of parliament with a petition in his hand, accompanied by a multitude of a hundred thousand determined fighters. Now his opportunity had arrived, and yet he found himself forced to send the people back to their homes. Now everything depended on his skill as an orator, and it did not fail him. He was followed by Ernest Jones, Harney, and other speakers. Then the petition was placed in three cabs and taken to the Houses of Parliament by the committee, whilst the people slowly and quietly dispersed.

O'Connor presented the petition, and stated that the number of signatures amounted to over 5·7 millions, whereupon it was handed over to a committee to be examined. The result showed that the number of signatures did not amount to over 5·7 millions, but only 1,975,469, furthermore that numbers of the names were in the same handwriting, finally, that many of the names were either imaginary or were not signed by their bearers.[1] This revelation turned the whole petition into a farce. And the imaginary names were so ridiculous that the reading of them produced an irresistibly comic effect. The tension which the fateful tenth of April had caused suddenly relaxed and shrieks of laughter followed as a natural reaction. After the terror came satire :—

THE CHARTISTS ARE COMING.

1.

" What a row and a rumpus there is I declare,
Tens of thousands are flocking from everywhere,
To petition the parliament onward they steer,
The Chartists are coming, oh dear, oh dear,

[1] *Cf.* Charles Kingsley, *Alton Locke*, chapters 33–4, an exceedingly moving description of the death of Sandy Mackaye and his despair at the inefficiency of Chartist leadership on April 10, 1848.

To demand equal justice, their freedom and right,
Pump-handles and broom-sticks, lawk, how they can fight!
The nation, they say, is overwhelmed with grief,
A peck loaf for twopence and four pounds of beef!

Chorus.—Hurrah for old England and liberty sweet,
The land that we live in and plenty to eat;
We shall ever remember this wonderful day,
See the Chartists are coming, get out of the way.

2.

"Such a number together was never yet seen,
Hurrah for the Charter and God save the Queen!
And when that Charter Old England has got,
We'll have stunning good beer at three-halfpence a pot;
A loaf for a penny, a pig for a crown,
And gunpowder tea at five farthings a pound,
Instead of red herrings we'll live on fat geese,
And lots of young women at twopence a piece.

3.

"The bakers and grocers, hark how they do laugh,
With dustmen and coal-heavers armed with a staff.
Five thousand old women, oh, how they do sing,
With frying-pans, fenders, and big rolling-pins.
There's Russell, and Bobby, old Nosey and Hume,
With pistol, bayonet, musket and broom,
Load away, fire away, chatter and jaw,
Shoot at a donkey and knock down a crow.

4.

"See the lads of Old Erin for liberty crow,
Repeal of the Union and Erin-go-bragh!
Peace and contentment, then none we can blame,
Plenty of labour, and paid for the same;
Some are rolling in riches and luxury too,
While millions are starving, with nothing to do,
Through the nation prosperity soon will be seen,
Hurrah for the Charter and God save the Queen!

5.

"Such constables there are in London, now mark,
Tailor and shoemaker, labourer and clerk,
Gaslightman, pickpocket, fireman too,
Greengrocer, hatter, pork-butcher and Jew;

Lollipop merchants and masons a lot,
And the covey that hollers ' Baked taters all hot.'
They are sworn to protect us and keep well the peace,
To frighten the Chartists and help the police."

The disgrace, however, clung to the petition, and the Chartists regarded O'Connor's behaviour on April 10 to have been the cause of its failure. The revolt against his leadership became general. His incapacity could no longer be denied. It was only after a lapse of fifteen months that the petition became the subject of debate in parliament. It was no longer treated seriously. On July 3, 1849, only 17 members voted in favour of the petition, whilst 222 voted against it. The year between the introduction and the rejection of the petition was a period of catastrophes for O'Connor. As already stated, his plans for the redemption of the land by small holdings collapsed in hopeless failure, and he was bound up in them with all his heart-strings. His heart broke and his mind began to give way.

4.—THE LAST STAGE OF CHARTISM

Chartism went steadily and visibly downhill after April 10, 1848. The Chartists felt that their movement had received a mortal blow, but few of them dared to admit it openly. The Convention, which had been convoked on April 4, continued its meetings and discussions until April 24, when it dissolved, only to be reconstituted on May 1 as a National Assembly, with the addition of new delegates. A plan of reorganisation was adopted, and some sensible speeches were delivered on the events of the last few years and on O'Connor's failure to play the part of the leader of the people. Militant tactics, however, still prevailed, furnishing the government with the excuse of giving Chartism its *coup de grace*. On May 13 the National Assembly was dissolved. The leaders, in disillusionment and desperation, left for the country, held mass meetings, delivered violent speeches, and threatened to organise a National Guard. In some places scenes of violence were enacted, in others spies and police agents manufactured secret conspiracies. These were

followed by wholesale arrests. From May to October, 1848, a reign of terror swept over England. Altogether about ninety Chartist leaders were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment, up to a maximum of two years, in London, Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Cheshire. Ernest Jones received the maximum term in July, and was treated at first like a common criminal in his prison, until O'Connor paid 5s. a week for him in order to secure better treatment and self-occupation.

The years 1849 and 1850 witnessed a remarkable intellectual revival of Chartism, probably in consequence of the influx of the foreign revolutionary leaders. A good press came into being, and was conducted almost exclusively by ordinary working men. It was, however, short lived. The *Spirit of Freedom* deserve special mention. It was edited by Gerald Massey, a poor, unschooled working man with a considerable and fertile talent for poetry. In the same year Harney left the *Northern Star* because O'Connor would not permit him to write in favour of a democratic and social republic. He successively founded the *Red Republican*, the *Friend of the People*, and the *Democratic Review*, and the three papers scarcely lasted two years. In the early part of 1852 he bought up the *Northern Star* for £100, changed its name to *Star of Freedom* in May, but the star went out in November, 1852. The great *Northern Star* ceased to exist after a stormy career of fifteen years. Its place was taken by Ernest Jones's *Notes to the People*, to which Karl Marx contributed several articles, and then by his *People's Paper*.

The fatal action of April 10, 1848, was meanwhile hastened by the collapse of O'Connor's plan of land reform and by the defeat of the European revolution. The British workmen never acquired a more international character than in 1848 to 1850. They knew the names of the revolutionary leaders in France, Prussia, Austria, and Hungary. They took the keenest interest in the victories of Paris and Berlin in February and March, 1848, and followed intently the course of the campaigns in Hungary. From all these movements they hoped for a beneficial reaction upon England. Then the bad news came and all the great hopes

and expectations faded away. The quondam victorious leaders of the revolution fled from their country and sought asylum in England. Yet English Chartism was unable to offer them anything more than enthusiastic meetings and greetings.

A contributory factor in the increasing weakness of the movement was the continued splitting up into sects. Several organisations were formed in rivalry with the National Charter Association, *e.g.*, the National Reform League, by Bronterre O'Brien, the National Regeneration Union, the People's Charter Union, the Social Reform League, etc. They broke up the last remnants of Chartism until the leaders were left without an army.

In 1855 Feargus O'Connor died in London, after having spent two years in a lunatic asylum. About 50,000 working men took part in his funeral procession.

Three years later Robert Owen breathed his last in his native place, Newtown. To the very end he remained faithful to his convictions and adhered to his main principles. Shortly before his death the local clergyman came to his bedside to offer him religious consolation. Owen declined the offer in the most decided manner, and when the minister asked him whether he did not regret having wasted his life in fruitless efforts, he made the proud rejoinder: "My life was not useless; I gave important truths to the world, and it was only for want of understanding that they were disregarded. I have been ahead of my time."

IX

MORAL INFLUENCE OF CHARTISM

I.—CONSERVATIVE SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENTS

THE catastrophic break with the past, which marks the period from 1815 to 1848, staggered the conservative minds of the nation, and stirred them to action. With their eyes turned towards the past, round which Sir Walter Scott had woven a romantic veil of bewitching glamour, they believed the present to exhibit nothing but disintegration, social subversion, total eclipse of Church and State authority, with the giant of Labour mortally wounded and writhing at the bottom of chaos. Like Plato and Cicero in their times, the social students and patriots of Great Britain were pained to see the ruthless struggle of the classes, the division of the nation into hostile camps: "Two nations, between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy, . . . as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets."[1] The cash nexus appeared not only unable to replace the old social bonds, but to aggravate the hostility which "the profit-and-loss philosophy" was engendering. "We call it a society and go about professing the totallest separation, isolation."[2] And Dickens puts into the mouth of Stephen Blackpool, the hero of *Hard Times*, the inarticulate wail, "It is all confusion." Although, as a rule, the moral philosophers and reformers knew little of the importance and meaning of Chartism, and probably very few of them saw the factory system at work, yet they could not help discovering that this movement "was the first open separation of interest, feeling, opinion, between the labouring portion of the commonwealth and all above them."[3] In the opinion of the conserva-

[1] Disraeli, *Sybil*, book ii., chap. 5. [2] Carlyle, *Past and Present*.
[3] J. S. Mill, *Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. II., p. 188–9.

tive thinkers it was capital that had brought the nation to that pass: "It is that the capitalist has found a slave that has supplanted the labour and ingenuity of man. Once he was an artisan; at the best, he now watches machines; and even that occupation slips from his grasp to the woman and the child. The capitalist flourishes, he amasses immense wealth; we sink lower and lower. . . . And yet they tell us that the interests of Capital and Labour are identical." [1] And in another passage he writes quite in the Coleridgean manner: "Since the passing of the Reform Act the altar of Mammon has blazed with triple worship. To acquire, to accumulate, to plunder each other by virtue of philosophic phrases, to propose a Utopia to consist only of wealth and toil, this has been the breathless business of enfranchised England for the last twelve years, until we are startled from our voracious strife by the wail of intolerable serfage." [2] Another conservative writer, whose book made a deep impression on the leaders of the Oxford Movement and on the future leaders of Christian Socialism, proclaimed to the country that encouragement for capital and prevention for the (labouring) population had been "the two leading ideas with statesmen and legislators for the last thirty years. They have now succeeded in their object. While the privations and distress of the labouring classes have increased, the wealth of the upper classes has been constantly accumulating, and the capital of those classes constantly augmenting." [3]

The dismay at the deplorable state of the nation was followed by ardent attempts at the reassertion of authority and restoration of social peace by means of legislative measures and private philanthropy. "We owe to the poor of our land," said Lord Ashley in 1843, "a weighty debt. We call them improvident and immoral; and many of them are so; but that improvidence and immorality are the results, in a great measure, of our neglect, and, in not a little, of our example." [4] The Chartist struggles

[1] Disraeli, *Sybil*, book ii., chap. 13. [2] *Id. op. cit.*, book i., chap. 5.
[3] Seeley, *Perils of the Nation*, 1843, p. xii.
[4] Hodder, *The Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury as Social Reformer*, p. 123.

and sufferings in the years between 1839 and 1842 were not fruitless. "The claims of labour," wrote Mill in 1845, "have become the question of the day, and even the Legislature is invited, in each Session and with increasing urgency, to provide that the labouring classes shall earn more, work less, or have their lot in some way alleviated. . . . The stream at present flows in a multitude of small channels; societies for the protection of needlewomen, of governesses,—associations to improve the buildings of the labouring classes, to provide them with baths, parks, and promenades, have started into existence. . . . But it is not in this spirit that the new schemes of benevolence are conceived. They are propounded as the beginning of a new moral order or an old order revived, in which the possessors of property are to resume their place as the paternal guardians of those less fortunate."[1] It was, however, by no means exclusively a time of social reform and philanthropy. Sadler, Lord Ashley, and their friends were not alone on the national scene. The attempts at restoration of authority in Church and State were even more strenuous, and they gave rise to fierce literary polemics, parliamentary duels, heated theological controversies, as well as to the repression of revolution by means of treason trials, imprisonment, and transportation. Looking behind all these various measures, one notices conservative thought brooding over the social chaos and searching for the kindly light to lead the country to permanent and stable order, based on the authority either of the laws of God, or of historic tradition, or of some heroic personality.

Pleiades upon pleiades of religious and moral philosophers, learned theologians, and stirring poets and novelists appeared on the horizon. Hurrell Froude, J. H. Newman and W. G. Ward, Carlyle, Lord John Manners and Benjamin Disraeli, Maurice, Kingsley, and Ludlow—all moving in the orbit of Conservatism, with Mill and Dickens as social Liberals and volunteers of the movement. All of them, without any exception, were either directly or indirectly under the influence of Coleridge. "Every Englishman of the present day," testified Mill, a close and

[1] J. S. Mill, *l. c.*

sympathetic observer of those critical years, " is by implication either a Benthamite or a Coleridgean ; holds views of human affairs which can only be proved true on the principles either of Bentham or of Coleridge." Bentham swayed Liberalism, Coleridge the thinking portion of Toryism. Mill forgot at that time the Chartists, who derived their principles neither from Bentham nor from Coleridge, but from Locke and Owen. A few years later, when writing and revising his *Principles of Political Economy*, he made ample amends for his oversight, as we shall see in a later chapter.

2.—THE OXFORD MOVEMENT AND YOUNG ENGLAND

The social elements of the Oxford Movement were subordinated to theology. Hurrell Froude, John Henry Newman, and W. G. Ward were mainly concerned with Church authority, and they believed to have found it in a return to Roman Catholicism. In retracing their steps to the origins of the Church, they rediscovered also the primitive Christian social and democratic spirit, the quasi-sacramental character of poverty, and the stigma of wealth. Their fierce opposition to Liberalism on account of its anti-dogmatic attitude, its corrosive and negative forces, and its respect for private and individual judgment, soon led them to join issue with individualist political economy, which was supposed to teach Capital to sacrifice everything to the production of wealth. " When the moral tone of the country is unchristianised," wrote Hurrell Froude, " it is all one whether the poor were serfs by law, or citizens by law. Their poverty in both cases is equally weak, contemptible, and ridiculous. It devolves on the Church, therefore, to assist in her own courts the rights of the poor. She must exhibit a picture of Christian equality, and put the poor and helpless in that honourable position, which shall render anything that injures or degrades them an obvious offence against the Church and shocking to the common feelings of Christians." [1] With characteristic boldness he expressed his sympathy with the French Christian Socialists, " a High Church Party in France, who are Republicans, and wish

[1] Quoted in W. G. Ward, *Ideal of a Christian Church*, p. 31.

for universal suffrage, on the ground that in proportion as the franchise falls lower the influence of the Church makes itself felt; at present the limits about coincide with those of the infidel faction." [1] The idea that an extension of the franchise would weaken the Liberal influence in Parliament was on the Continent quite common. The most outspoken opponent of Liberal political economy was Newman. When he learned that these doctrines were being spread in Oxford, he indignantly replied that they formed "a categorical contradiction of our Lord, S. Paul, S. Chrysostom, S. Leo, and all saints." The pursuit of wealth and gain, the endeavour to accumulate the means of future subsistence and enjoyment, were not, as the political economists were teaching, the great moral source of improvement, virtue, and happiness, but the root of all evil, "and the poor, on the contrary, are blessed, for theirs is the Kingdom of God." [2]

On parallel lines with the Tractarians moved Young England, whose ideal was a regenerated feudal order of society. They looked back wistfully to the time, when—

> "Each knew his place—king, peasant, peer, or priest,
> The greatest owned connection with the least;
> From rank to rank the generous feeling ran,
> And linked society as man to man.
>
> "Gone are those days, and gone the ties that then
> Bound peers and gentry to their fellow men.
> Now, in their place, behold the modern slave,
> Doomed, from the very cradle to the grave,
> To tread his lonely path of care and toil;
> Bound, in sad truth, and bowed down to the soil,
> He dies, and leaves his sons their heritage—
> Work for their prime, and workhouse for their age." [3]

The poet is yearning for Church and Noble rule, for seeing the Holy Church once more in unity, for there is more happiness under her wings, though clouds of incense load the air, than in

[1] Hurrell Froude, *Remains*, Vol. I., p. 312.
[2] John Henry Newman, *Idea of a University*, ed. 1873, pp. 91-3
[3] Lord John Manners, *England's Trust*, p. 16.

some murky English street or alley, where science turns man's energies to gain. His indignation against capitalism, Liberal legislation, and materialistic science reaches its most uncompromising expression in the famous lines—

> "Let wealth and commerce, laws and learning die,
> But leave us still our old Nobility."[1]

In practice, the men of Young England worked for social reform legislation with Lord Ashley. None of these movements aimed at the subversion of private property, but were directed against the excesses of unregulated wealth-production.

It was different with those ardent and tremendously serious Protestants, who created Christian Socialism. Maurice, Kingsley, Ludlow, Vansittart Neale, and their friends, really meant to supplant the individualist and competitive system of property by co-operative socialist production.

3.—CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM

The central figure of the remarkable group of men, who created Christian Socialism in England, was Frederick Denison Maurice, "towering spiritually by head and shoulders over the rest."[2] In nobility and saintliness of character, in theological learning and subtlety of intellect he may, perhaps, be compared with Newman. But the spheres of their work were poles asunder. Newman was a great ecclesiastic, essentially mediaeval in temper and intellect, while Maurice, by his religious and social philosophy and intensely national feeling, represented one of the spiritual forces of the nineteenth century. As a Protestant and Englishman, with a high political ideal, and more fully under the influence of Coleridge than Newman was, he desired to see Christianity not only a faith, but a deed. The Kingdom of Christ was not to come, but to be realised. He believed that God had an educational plan for the world, by which the perfection of the individual and of the race was to be accomplished, that in the development of that plan each age of human history had its

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 24. [2] J. M. Ludlow, *Economic Review*. October, 1893.

own work to do, that there was a Christian ideal of society,—nay, that the existing society, with its divinely created obligations, was the best, if man could only pay reverent homage to those obligations.[1] The Bible was not there only to be read and to edify individually, but to form, as Coleridge taught, the manual of the statesman.[2] God's order was mutual love and fellowship, while selfishness and competition were the direct results of man's disorder: "God's order seems to me more than ever the antagonist of man's systems: Christian socialism is in my mind the assertion of God's order."[3] This is a remarkable sentence; it translates a natural law doctrine into Christian terms. "Human society," he further proclaimed, "is a body consisting of many members, not a collection of warring atoms; true workmen must be fellow-workmen, not rivals; a principle of justice, not of selfishness, must govern exchanges." Such *dicta* might have been enunciated by any of the leading Owenite writers. But while they would have based them on rationalist and secularist principles, Maurice found them to be rooted in the teachings of the Gospel. After a discussion in an Owenite and Chartist meeting, in 1849, he wrote to Ludlow:—

"I never heard a stronger witness for the power of the will to regulate and command circumstances than came from those socialist worshippers of circumstances. I think they should be made to feel that communism, in whatever sense it is a principle of the New Moral World, is a most important principle of the old world, and that every monastic institution—properly so-called—was a communist institution for all intents and purposes. The idea of Christian communism has been a most vigorous and generative one in all ages, and must be destined to a full development in ours."[4]

Maurice's main idea was to socialise the Christian and to Christianise the socialist. Socialism appeared to him to be

[1] Charles W. Stubbs, *Charles Kingsley*, 1899, Introduction.
[2] F. D. Maurice, *Kingdom of Christ*, ed. 1842 (Letter to D. Coleridge).
[3] F. Maurice, *Life of F. D. Maurice*, second ed. Vol. II., p. 44.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 6–7.

essentially the business of the Church and not of the State: "We want the Church fully to understand her own foundation, fully to work out the communism which is implied in her existence. Church Reformation, therefore, in its highest sense, involves *theologically* the reassertion of these truths in their fulness, apart from their Calvinistical and Tractarian limitations and dilutions; *socially* the assertion on the ground of these truths of an actually living community under Christ, in which no man has a right to call anything that he has his own, but in which there is spiritual fellowship and practical co-operation."[1]

It is impossible not to discern in these announcements distinct traces of patristic and scholastic teachings. Maurice's studies of mediaeval philosophy evidently left deep impressions on his mind, and predisposed him to look favourably on the effort of the socialist propagandists of the Chartist period. Indeed, as far as the socialist form of economic life is concerned, there was no difference between Maurice and the leading Owenites. On the other hand, he differed greatly from the political Chartists, for he was no democrat and condemned the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people as atheistic and subversive. Maurice was even prepared to serve, on the memorable April 10, 1848, as a special constable. He believed kingship to be of divine origin. We cannot help regarding Maurice as a spiritual descendant of John Wycliffe.

His friend and adherent, Charles Kingsley, stands far behind his master in point of theological scholarship and socialist thought. He was essentially a poet, with the temperament of an agitator,—fervid, vehement, inconsistent in his views, easily moved by tales of misery and ready to attack any social evil that met his eye. But for his political principles, which somehow were bound up with Conservatism, he might have been a revolutionary Chartist leader. He publicly called himself a Chartist,"[2] although he was ready to eschew a thousand charters for the French cry of "organisation of labour" into co-operative workshops. Still, his revolutionary temper was unmistakable, and

[1] J. Maurice, *Life of F. D. Maurice*, p. 10.

[2] Mrs. Kingsley, *Letters and Memoirs*, Vol. I., p. 306.

he directed his mighty pen both against landed and capitalist sweaters. His *Yeast* deals with the former :—

"You have sold the labouring man, squire,
Body and soul to shame,
To pay for your seat in the House, squire,
And to pay for the feed of your game.

* * * *

"When packed in one reeking chamber,
Man, maid, mother, and little ones lay;
While the rain pattered on the rotting bride-bed,
And the walls let in the day.

* * * *

"Our daughters with base-born babies
Have wandered away in their shame;
If your misses had slept, squire, where they did,
Your misses might do the same." [1]

His *Alton Locke* is one great terrible indictment of the merciless manufacturers. Kingsley, Maurice, and their friends, who created Christian Socialism in England, were distinguished from the men of the Oxford and Young England movement by looking forward, and not backward. "My whole heart," wrote Kingsley, "is set, not on retrogression, outward or inward, but on progression. . . . The new element is democracy, in Church and State. Waiving the question of its evil or its good, we cannot stop it,—let us Christianise it instead." Yet, he was no democrat in the usual meaning of the term. He thought the real battle of the time was not Radical or Whig against Peelite or Tory, but the Church, the gentleman, the workman against the shopkeepers and the Manchester School.[2] His devotion to the cause of Labour was boundless : "I would shed the last drop of my life blood for the social and political emancipation of the people of England." [3] His knowledge of Chartism was fairly wide. *Alton Locke* contains the history of this movement from 1844 to 1848, while Disraeli's *Sybil* is based on Chartism of the years from 1838 to 1843.

[1] Charles Kingsley, *Yeast*, chap. 11.
[2] Mrs. Kingsley, *op. cit.*, p. 214–5. [3] *Id.*, p. 184.

With Maurice and Kingsley worked J. M. Ludlow, who, having lived in Paris, possessed much knowledge of French socialism. On March 2, 1848, he reported to Maurice that socialism was a real and very great power among the Parisian workmen, and that it must be Christianised or it would shake Christianity to its foundation, precisely because it appealed to the higher and not to the lower instincts of man.[1]

Among the other members of the Christian socialist movement may be mentioned E. Vansittart Neale, an ardent co-operator, who supplied the funds necessary for socialist co-operative experiments; Thomas Hughes, the author of *Tom Brown's Schooldays;* Charles Blackford Mansfield, a young scientist and mystic, who inspired Kingsley with the idea of sanitary reform; Charles Sully and Lloyd Jones, both socialist workmen, who organised co-operative shops and propagated the ideas of the movement among the working-men.[2]

They formed altogether a remarkable group of men—leaders and officers, but without any army behind them.

The first manifestations of the movement date from April 10, 1848. On that memorable day Kingsley met Ludlow, who called upon Maurice to report to him the fate of the final struggle of Chartism. Two days later Kingsley issued a manifesto to the London workmen, and on May 6, 1848, the first number of the weekly, *Politics for the People*, was issued. Maurice wrote the prospectus, explaining their aim and end to consist in the establishment of a union between social life and Christianity. Under the pseudonym "Parson Lot," Kingsley contributed a letter to the Chartists: "My quarrel with the Charter is that it does not go far enough. I want to see you free; but I do not see how what you ask for will give you what you want. You mistake *legislative* reform for *social* reform, or that men's hearts can be changed by Act of Parliament. . . . It disappointed me bitterly when I read it. . . . The French cry of Organisation of Labour is worth a thousand of it, and yet that does not go to

[1] F. Maurice, *Life of F. D. Maurice*, Vol. I., p. 458.

[2] Compare J. M. Ludlow, *Economic Review*, October, 1893, and January, 1894.

the bottom of the matter by many a mile." He complains that many of the Chartists were trying to do God's work with the devil's tools. Nevertheless, he believed that the time was near when those glorious old words were to be fulfilled: "Thou, Lord, hast heard the desire of the poor. Thou preparest their hearts, and Thine ear hearkeneth thereto, to help the fatherless and poor unto their right that the man of the world be no more exalted against Thee."

Although the paper was exceedingly well written, and had about 2,000 subscribers, its career was cut short after four months. The reason of its rapid extinction has never been explained. It must be assumed, however, that the vast majority of its subscribers were not workmen, for whom the paper was intended. The summer of 1848 was a time of severe persecutions of all revolutionary elements; the Chartist masses were not in a mood to take advice from clergymen and members of the upper classes. Among the contributors to *Politics for the People* were: Maurice, Kingsley (Parson Lot), J. M. Ludlow (John Townsend), Archbishop Whateley, Archbishop Trench, Bishop Thirlwall, Dean Stanley, Dr. Guy, Sir Edward Strachey. Most of them wrote anonymously or under a pseudonym. The editors consoled themselves—

> "There is no failure for the good and wise:
> What though thy seed should fall by the wayside
> And the birds snatch it; yet the birds are fed;
> Or they may bear it far across the tide,
> To give rich harvest after thou art dead."

In the year 1849 Maurice and Kingsley attended meetings of Chartists, and in 1850 they issued *Tracts on Christian Socialism.* The term "Christian Socialism" had not been used before that time. Maurice,[1] writing to Ludlow in January, 1850, declares: "We must not beat about the bush. What right have we to address the English people? We must have something special to tell them, or we ought not to speak. *Tracts on Christian*

[1] F. Maurice, *Life of F. D. Maurice*, Vol. II., p. 35.

Socialism is, it seems to me, the only title which will define our object, and will commit us at once to the conflict we must engage in sooner or later with the unsocial Christian and the unchristian socialist."

The *Tracts* were no more successful than the *Politics*. On November 2, 1850, the weekly, *Christian Socialist*, was started, in which Ludlow developed the principles of the movement. Socialism and Christianity were in their nature not hostile, but akin to each other. Christianity, however feeble and torpid it might seem to many just now, was but as an eagle shedding its worn-out plumage and putting on new (Socialism) to spread ere long its mighty wings for a broader and heavenlier flight. "Socialism without Christianity, on the one hand, is as lifeless as the feathers without the bird, and therefore easily blown off. Christianity, on the other hand, when stripped of socialism, is chilly and helpless." The Christian gospel was wholly incompatible with a political economy which proclaimed self-interest to be the very pivot of social action. The principle of buying cheap and selling dear; the system of trade, based on the idea of taking more from our neighbour than we gave him, were inimical to the teachings of Christianity. The aim of the Christian socialist movement was to substitute fair prices and living wages for false cheapness and starvation. Its watchwords were, "Association and Exchange" instead of competition for profit.

The *Christian Socialist* expired at the end of 1851. In the meantime a dozen small co-operative workshops were established, which could not withstand the impact of capitalist competition. Besides, there is no worse human material to experiment with than the remnants of a defeated revolutionary movement. Embittered and demoralised, they are a thorn in the side of their old friends as well as their new ones. The chief speaker and missionary of the Christian socialists, Lloyd Jones, an old Owenite and tailor, was sent to Lancashire for the purpose of winning adherents for the movement. In a protracted public discussion with Ernest Jones, the Chartist leader, he was utterly defeated. The workmen flatly refused to pay any attention

to the Christian socialist arguments.[1] They were still clamouring for the Charter,—for political power in order to use it as an instrument for the socialisation of the means of production.

Their failure to gain adherents among the Chartists and the onslaughts levelled against them by Conservative writers[2] induced Maurice, Kingsley, and Hughes to change *The Christian Socialist* into *The Journal of Association* (1852) and to devote their energies to the dissemination of co-operative principles only. In 1854 the Christian socialist movement was at an end. Their efforts were, however, not quite ineffectual. They contributed to the legalisation of co-operative enterprise, to the promotion of sanitary reform, and to the furtherance of education among the London workmen by founding the Working Men's College, where some of the most famous men of art and science acted as teachers, among them being Ruskin, Tyndall, D. G. Rossetti, Madox Brown, and J. R. Seeley.

4.—J. S. MILL AND RICHARD JONES

The last years of Chartist class warfare and the ferment of 1848 have also left an indelible impress upon British economic literature. An attempt was made to extend the bounds of political economy, so as to include sociological problems, or even to make economics the basis of sociology. Two of its economic writers, John Stuart Mill and Rev. Richard Jones, were prompted to lend expression to sociological thoughts and speculations which were quite new in learned circles of acknowledged adherents of the existing order.

The disciple of Ricardo and Bentham was constrained to admit that all the mechanical inventions and general progress had hardly lightened the day's toil of the worker, and that they but enabled a greater number of people to live a life of drudgery and imprisonment, and an increased number of manufacturers and other middle class men to make fortunes (*Principles*, 1869, book iv.,

[1] An account of this debate is given in *Christian Socialist*, December 20 and 27, 1851.

[2] *Quarterly Review*, October, 1851, p. 523.

ch. vi., sec. 2[1]). Mill rightly discerned the effect of Chartism, when he declared that the working classes had now taken their interests into their own hands, and were perpetually showing that they thought the interests of the employers to be not identical with their own, but opposite to them. While reforms and the organisation of the working classes might alter the distribution of the produce to their advantage, the present class relations could not permanently last. "I cannot think," he declares, "that the working classes will be permanently contented with the condition of labouring for wages as their ultimate state. . . . In the present stage of human progress, when ideas of equality are daily spreading more widely among the poorer classes, and can no longer be checked by anything short of the active suppression of printed discussion and even of freedom of speech, it is not to be expected that the division of the human race into two hereditary classes, employers and employed, can be permanently maintained" (*Ibid.*, book iv. ch. 7). These relations were unsatisfactory both to the employers and employed. An open or secret war raged between them, to the detriment of the country. On neither side was there any justice or fairness, and it would sooner or later become insupportable to the employing classes to live in close and hourly contact with persons whose interests and feelings are in hostility to them. "Capitalists are as much interested as labourers in placing the operations of industry on such a footing that those who labour for them may feel the same interest in the work which is felt by those who labour on their own account" (*Ibid.*, book iv., ch. 7).

Mill was groping his way towards socialism. He witnessed the class war in Great Britain and France, and the rise of Labour to importance, and arrived at the conviction that a tolerable arrangement might be effected through some form of partnership of Labour as a means to the economic education of the masses, as a stage in the process towards complete socialism. "The form of association, however, which if mankind continue

[1] The *Principles* appeared in 1848. The book was revised in the successive editions, but not materially altered. The changes made in the second edition (1849) were all in favour of socialism.

to improve, must be expected in the end to predominate, is . . . the association of labourers themselves on terms of equality, collectively owning the capital with which they carry on their operations, and working under managers elected and removable by themselves," according to the theories found in the writings of Owen and Louis Blanc (*Ibid.*, book iv. ch. 7).

Even more interesting, from a theoretical point of view, are the observations of Rev. Richard Jones. He was the successor of Robert Malthus in the chair of political economy at the East India College at Haileybury, and may be regarded as the pioneer of the historical school of political economy in Great Britain. Unlike Mill, he wrote relatively little, but his literary remains bear the impress of an original mind. Probably owing to his position as professor and his relations with the Government of the period, he never allowed his thoughts and Celtic temperament full play. In his *Text-Book of Lectures*,[1] published in 1852, while dealing with capital and wages, he incidentally remarks: "The first capitalist employers—those who first advance the wages of labour from accumulated stock, and seek a revenue in the shape of profits from such advance—have been ordinarily a class distinct from the labourers themselves. A state of things may hereafter exist, and parts of the world may be approaching to it, under which the labourers and the owners of accumulated stock may be identical; but in the progress of nations which we are now observing, we see . . . a body of employers who pay the labourers by advances of capital out of the returns to which the owners aim at realising a distinct revenue. This may not be as desirable a state of things as that in which labourers and capitalists are identified; but we must still accept it as constituting a stage in the march of industry, which has hitherto marked the progress of advancing nations." [2]

Capitalism is thus but a stage in the economic development of mankind. Moreover, the great political, social, moral, and intellectual changes are inseparably connected with changes in

[1] Richard Jones, *Literary Remains*, edited by William Whewell, D.D. London, 1859, pp. 339–531.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 445 (Lecture IV.).

the economic organisation of communities. Political economy is, therefore, not merely a science of capital, profits, rents, and wages, but the basis of social science. For, "economic changes necessarily exercise a commanding influence over the different political and social elements to be found in the populations where they take place; that influence extends to the intellectual character, to the habits, manners, morals, and happiness of nations. . . . There is a close connection between the economic and social organisation of nations and their power of production." [1]

The whole Lecture IV. is very curious. It contains also the germs of that philosophy of social evolution which the Marxists call the Materialist Conception of history. It is a delicate balancing between capitalism and anti-capitalism. It is a strong reflex of the stirring events and thoughts of the Chartist period.

5.—CONCLUDING REMARKS

After a desperate contest of thirty years' duration, Chartism had come to an end. It had not been a struggle of a plebs for equal rights with the patriciate to spoliate and enslave other classes and nations, but a class war aiming at the overthrow of the capitalist society and putting production, distribution, and exchange on a co-operative basis. The working-class was apparently defeated.

Baffled and exhausted through erratic leadership, untold sacrifices, and want of proper mental munitions, they retired from the field of battle, bleeding and decimated, but little aware of the great results they had achieved. They only saw shattered ideals and broken hopes that lay strewn on the long path they had been marching and counter-marching from 1825 to 1855, not knowing that it was from the wreckage and *débris* of those shattered ideals that the material was gathered for building and paving the road of social progress.

The advance which Great Britain had made in those thirty years in social reform and democracy was enormous. The Chartist period witnessed the first real Factory Act (1833), the

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 405–6.

first mining law for the protection of child and female labour (1842), the Ten Hours day (1847), the reduction of the newspaper stamp (1836), the abolition of the Corn Laws (1846), the repeal of the Corresponding Acts (1846). It bequeathed to the working classes the co-operative store and co-operative production, more successful trade unions, and international sentiments. It forced the thinking men of the nation to regard the labour problem as a serious subject for investigation and discussion. Finally, it imbued the thinking portion of the working class with the conviction that Liberalism must first do its work, before Labour could come into its own, both in the legislature and in the factory. In short, from the catastrophes of 1832, 1834, 1839, 1842, and 1848 the lesson emerged that the revolutionary policy of "all or nothing," of a sweeping triumph by one gigantic effort, of contempt for reform and of the supreme value of a total and radical subversion of the old order, were foredoomed to failure. The generation that succeeded Chartism went into Gladstone's camp and refused to leave it either for the social Toryism of Benjamin Disraeli or for the social revolution of Karl Marx.

PART IV

MODERN SOCIALISM
(1855-1939)

X

MAIN CURRENTS OF THE PERIOD

THE period with which we are now going to deal, while, on the whole, less stirring, is more complicated, and of much more vital importance than any of the foregoing periods. We are leaving, as it were, the antiquities of socialist speculation and the childhood of Labour, and are nearing the recent past and the immediate present. We have now to do with problems of modern society which are touching the very life of the nation. It might, therefore, be expedient, for a better comprehension of the totality of the period, to give, before entering into details, a broad outline of its tendencies and struggles.

From the angle of vision of the socialist historian the sixty-five years from 1855 to 1920 exhibit three distinct phases:

I.—ZENITH OF LIBERALISM

Unchallenged reign of liberal thought, and partly apathetic, partly active adherence of Labour to the existing order. The twenty years following upon the collapse of Chartism formed the golden age of middle class Liberalism. The glamour of its doctrines as set forth by Mill in his essay, *On Liberty*, the phenomenal growth of British trade and commerce, the unrivalled position of Great Britain as the workshop of the world, made British Liberalism the lodestar of all nations striving for freedom and wealth. Competition as the regulator of economic relations, free trade as the international bond of peace and goodwill, individual liberty as the sacred ideal of national politics, reigned supreme, and under their weight the entire formation of social revolutionary ideas of the past disappeared from view. The working classes formed a part of triumphant Liberalism.

Gladstone, surveying his hosts in 1866, appeared quite justified in telling his Conservative opponents that there was no use

fighting against the social forces, " which move onwards in their might and majesty and which . . . are marshalled on our side." [1] He might have addressed the same eloquent words to the leaders of the International Working Men's Association, who with Karl Marx at their head, were precisely at that time making a serious attempt to resuscitate Chartism and detach the masses from the Liberal Party. Socialism and independent labour politics came to be regarded as exotic plants which could never flourish on British soil.

The trade unions renounced all class warfare and merely tried to use their new citizenship (1867) and their growing economic organisation—the first trade union congress took place in 1869—with a view to influencing the distribution of the national wealth in their favour. Their aim and end was that of a class striving for equality with the possessing and ruling classes. It was, despite some struggle for the legalisation of trade unionism, a period of social peace, and it lasted till about 1880.

2.—LIBERAL LABOUR. BIRTH OF STATE SOCIALISM

The second phase is characterised by the rise of Labour to a junior partnership with the Liberal Party and the birth and growth of State and municipal socialism and new unionism. From 1875 the lustre of Liberalism began to grow dim, and in the years between 1880 and 1890 its inadequacy became apparent.[2] The years 1873 and 1874 witnessed big strikes in mining, manufacturing, and agricultural districts; they saw the entrance of working men into Parliament. On the heels of these ominous events came economic depression; free trade had not secured prosperity. Competition had proved destructive not only of the unfit, but of the less favoured by fortune; large capital crushed small capital, regardless of the qualities of their possessors. Foreign competition, mainly

[1] Quoted in John Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, ed. 1908, Vol. I., p. 627.

[2] *Cf.* John Morley, in *Fortnightly Review*, April, 1882, pp. 503–4, October, 1882, pp. 533–4.

American and German, fostered by protective tariffs, was making itself increasingly felt to British manufacturers and agricultural interests. Combination and mutual protection were gradually coming to be regarded as superior to the competitive systems. The propositions of orthodox political economy were seriously questioned. Land reform movements grew in strength. The term *Nationalisation* was created. Socialist organisations sprang up: the Social Democratic Federation, founded by H. M. Hyndman, propagating the Marxian doctrine of class war; the Fabian Society, with Sidney Webb as its foremost exponent, trying to apply socialism to practical politics; the Independent Labour Party, working with might and main, under the leadership of James Keir Hardie, to discredit the old Liberal-Labour leaders, to imbue the younger trade union officials with the spirit of socialism. They were years of a severe contest between liberalism and socialism for the soul of the working-class.

As long as Gladstone was active, the socialist efforts met with little success. Gladstone, on whose mind the social criticism of the early 'forties had left an indelible impression,[1] never lost sight of organised Labour, and whenever he saw it moving towards class warfare and socialism he spared no effort to lead it back to peaceful waters. He was the most potent personal force of Liberal Labourism. His influence among the trade unionists was amazing. And they received from him political recognition as soon as they became an indispensable part of Liberalism, that is, from 1886. It was Gladstone who raised working men to the rank of Ministers, thus inaugurating the era which has finally thrown open the gates of the Cabinet to Labour leaders and socialists. The growing strength of socialism and Labour politics since 1880 may be gauged by the treatment which prominent trade unionists and socialists received at various times at the hands of Liberal Governments. In 1834 William Godwin, the anarchist communist author of *Political Justice*, received an appointment as gentleman usher; in 1849 Samuel Bamford, the Radical weaver and one of the leaders of the

[1] See *supra*, Part III., p. 140.

demonstration at Peterloo, was made doorkeeper at Somerset House. Such was in those times the remuneration of socialists and labour leaders, whom the Governments delighted to honour. In 1886 Henry Broadhurst, the Labour lieutenant of Gladstone, was appointed Under-Secretary of State; in 1892 Thomas Burt, Parliamentary Secretary; in 1906 John Burns entered the Cabinet. The difference between a doorkeeper of a Government building and a member of the Cabinet indicates the rise in the value of socialism and Labour politics from 1834 to 1906.

3.—INDEPENDENT LABOUR. REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISM

Liberal-labour was declining since 1900. In that year the Labour Party was formed, and under the leadership of J. R. MacDonald, Hardie, and Pete Curran it rapidly developed. In 1906 the Party entered Parliament as an independent political force. Chartism revived, and the nation found itself soon in the grip of a widespread Labour unrest, which has been going on increasing in volume and revolutionary fervour, the motive power of which appears to be a more or less conscious striving for industrial democracy, for control of production,—an aim to be attained no more by State socialism or collectivism, but through direct action, through subordinating parliamentary methods to economic warfare. The new phase has already produced a host of leaders and writers, the most prominent of whom is G. D. H. Cole. The British Labour movement has never attracted so many intellectuals as at present. Hands and brains are unitedly at work towards some shape of a socialist reconstruction of the economic foundation and governmental system of society. They but form, under various names, a part of the general Labour unrest that is convulsing the civilised world. The social crisis is practically universal.

The whole movement appears to be the inevitable outcome of the contrast between political and legal equality on the one hand and industrial dependence and insecurity of existence on the other. Politically sovereign in the legislature, the workman is a mere hireling in the workshop; he can make and unmake Governments, but has no say whatever in the arrangement of his

daily work. Political power without economic power is, therefore, in his eyes a mockery and dangerous delusion. He now desires some part in the control of the production, just as he desired, a half a century ago, a part in the making of the laws. The mentality of the working classes is now passing from politics to economics, and from economics to social ethics. They are no longer willing to be treated as a commodity. The older socialists, as we know, used to argue against the wage system on economic grounds; they said that labour as a commodity differed from other commodities by not only affording value for value, but by producing surplus value. The present-day socialist or revolutionary trade unionists or guild socialists, while agreeing with their predecessors, are arguing that labour differs from other commodities also by being inseparably bound up with a human soul. The working classes have grown in moral and intellectual stature, and are asking the nation to regard and treat them as free personalities. It is an appeal on economic as well as moral grounds.

Keeping this general outline in view, we shall now proceed to treat the various phases in detail, describing the events and movements as well as exhibiting the theories underlying them.

XI

INTERNATIONALISM AND LIBERAL LABOUR

I.—YEARS OF APATHY

The ten years after the failure of Chartism were a period of calm. All efforts to revive the movement proved ineffectual. Moreover, the working classes seemed to have abandoned politics altogether, and turned their attention to trade unionism and co-operation. Radical politicians, like Cobden and Bright, deplored the political indifference of the working classes and confessed themselves powerless to stir them into activity. The ruling classes, mindful of the Chartist agitations, attempted to introduce moderate measures of franchise reforms, but they met with no response from the masses.[1] In 1861, Cobden complained that the working men were "so quiet under the taunts and insults offered them. Have they no Spartacus among them to head a revolt of the slave class against their political tormentors? I suppose it is the reaction from the follies of Chartism which keeps the present generation so quiet."[2] Even in 1863 Cobden described the conditions of the workers as that of political inertia. Two years later, however, we find the working men in full activity for suffrage reform, and in 1867 in possession of the franchise!

This rapid transformation appears to have been the result of the stirring events in the sphere of international politics—the American Civil War and the Polish insurrection, and of the agitation of the International Working Men's Association. The thinking portion of the British working men retained as a legacy from the Chartist period strong sympathies for progressive movements abroad. During the American Civil War they

[1] John Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, popular ed., 1908, I., p. 623.
[2] John Morley, *Life of Cobden*, ed. 1903, p. 829.

demonstrated their sympathies for the Northern States; in the time of the Polish insurrection of 1863 they were heart and soul with the Poles; the Italians struggling to be free could always rely on the friendly feelings of British Labour, and when Garibaldi came to London they gave him a royal welcome. The working classes, once set in motion, were soon drawn into the agitation for suffrage reform. Under the auspices of the London Trades a Suffrage Association was formed in 1864, which was turned into the Reform League, the efficient instrument that caused the Government to introduce and carry the Second Reform Bill and change the United Kingdom into a Democracy. The close connection between internationalism and the reform agitation is most clearly exhibited by the fact that the same men who organised public meetings and demonstrations in favour of the anti-slavery Northern States, of the Poles and the Italians, were also the leaders of the Reform League—George Odger, W. Randall Cremer, and Robert Applegarth. They were likewise some of the most prominent members of the International Working Men's Association.

Internationalism was no less potent a factor in the economic sphere of the Labour movement. The sympathy of the advanced sections of the French working classes with Poland and Italy, coupled with the desire of their leaders to learn something of English trade unionism, caused them to utilise their visit to the International Exhibition in London in 1862 for entering into closer communication with the London Labour leaders. After an exchange of addresses in 1863, it was decided to convene a conference in London for the purpose of forming an International Association of Working Men. This conference took place in the fourth week of September, 1864, and settled the main question. In order to afford the London working men an opportunity of welcoming their foreign friends, and to seal the bond of friendship between the French and British working classes, it was resolved to hold a public meeting on September 28, and to invite the representatives of all working men's societies domiciled in London to attend either as guests or speakers. Among the representatives who accepted the invitation and

attended the meeting was Karl Marx, whose knowledge of working class economics and whose literary abilities predestined him for the intellectual leadership of the new organisation.

2.—KARL MARX

Several circumstances have combined to render it necessary to deal with Marx (1818–1883) as one of the decisive personal factors of modern socialism in Great Britain. First, the best part of his life (1849–1883) was spent in London, where he gathered the elements of his economic system, partly from the writings of the Ricardian school and partly from the anti-capitalist thinkers who in the first half of the last century directed their critical shafts against the new social structure which arose out of the Industrial Revolution.[1] Marx gathered up their fragmentary views, gave them logical coherence and sequence, and embodied them into his system : he was the executor of the testament they had left. Secondly, Chartism and British industrial life were the inductive material from which he drew his sociological conclusions and upon which he based his hypotheses. Thirdly, the rise of modern socialism in Great Britain since 1882, as well as the whole Labour unrest since 1907, as far as their leaders have been attempting to give them a theoretical foundation, are inseparably linked to Marxism.

The teachings of Marx divide into three parts : (*a*) Sociological law of history, or the materialist conception of history ; (*b*) class warfare and its meaning ; (*c*) evolution of capitalism.

(*a*) *Materialist conception of history.*

Even a mere glance at human history shows that man, from period to period, has held different views of morality, religion, philosophy, law, government, trade, and commerce ; that he has had diverse and different social and governmental arrangements ; that he has undergone a whole series of struggles, wars, and

[1] *Cf. supra*, Part II., pp. 245–70. In the last fifteen years of his life, Marx wrote a vigorous and brilliant English, even better than German. In his German writings of that period the English syntax predominates, which is sufficient proof that he no longer thought in German, but in English.

migrations. What is the sufficient cause and reason of this baffling diversity and restlessness, of those various changes of human thought and action? Marx raises that question not for the purpose of investigating the psychological origin of the ideas underlying those arrangements and movements, but with a view to finding the motive power that is causing the changes and revolutions of the essentials and forms of the mental and social phenomena. He is much less interested in the origin and statics of things than in their dynamics: he is searching for the dynamic law of history.

Marx replies: The prime motive power causing the changes of human consciousness and, consequently, of the social arrangements, cannot be found in human reason nor in any transcendental idea or divine inspiration, but in the material conditions of life, that is, in the way in which man, as a social being, produces the means of life. Of all categories of the material conditions of existence the most important is production of the necessary means of life. This depends on the *forces of production*, which are partly inanimate (soil, water, climate, raw materials, tools, and machines) and partly personal (labourers, inventors, discoverers, engineers, and racial qualities). The foremost place among the productive forces belongs to the manual and mental labourers; they are in the capitalist society the real creators of exchange-value. The next place of importance is taken by technology; it is an eminently alterating and revolutionising force in society. These forces are operating under *conditions of production*, that is, under laws of property, political arrangements and class relations, habits and manners, moral and intellectual conceptions, created by man in conformity with, and for the purpose of promoting the operation of the productive forces. Or in other words: In response to the stimuli of the productive forces man builds up the social order, government, religion, morality, art, philosophy, and science. The material production is the substructure or the groundwork, while the corresponding political, religious, moral, philosophical, and scientific systems are the superstructure, the upper stories of society. The substructure is material, the superstructure is the psychical reflex and effect.

It is well to keep in mind the two Marxist concepts: *productive forces* and *conditions of production.* The former are, in the main, gifts of nature, the latter are created by man, under the stimulus of the productive forces, according to his moral and intellectual qualities. Man, even the most heroic, is not the sovereign maker and lawgiver of social life, but its executive; he can but comprehend the material forces operating in the groundwork of society and give their tendencies and requirements political, legal, institutional, intellectual, and emotional expression and effect.

When the productive forces expand and improve, in consequence either of the acquired greater skill and productive capacity of the workpeople through mechanical inventions and application of science to trade and industry, or of geographical discoveries and extension of the markets,—when, therefore, the productive forces are undergoing changes and the substructure of society is being altered, the old conditions of production (the laws, institutions, and systems of thought) gradually turn into impediments and cease altogether to satisfy the requirements of the productive forces and social life. For the old conditions of production were in harmony only with productive forces that are disappearing. With the unfolding of the new productive forces, the contrast, friction, and opposition between them and the old conditions of production grow keener. The superstructure ceases to respond to the new forces. Society is out of gear. A social crisis has arisen, since the institutions, class relations, and systems of thought are more conservative and cling to the old forms. Society enters on a revolutionary period, the symptoms and operating effects of which are the spread of dissatisfaction, unrest, class warfare, rise of new thinkers and prophets who in an apparently strange dialect and in accordance with their temperament, knowledge, and character attempt to interpret the crisis and to teach how to reorganise the conditions of production in the light of the new productive forces. The old social formation, however, does not go under unless and until the new productive forces have grown in volume and maturity, so as to form a solid groundwork for

the new superstructure which is gradually being formed and erected in the storm and stress of class warfare, in the shock and clash of intellectual and moral controversies.[1]

The evolutionary view of society Marx acquired from Hegel, who regarded nature and history as being involved in a process of evolution inherently propelled by the Idea (a mystical God) to create and negate and recreate one stage after another, and each higher than the other, in eternal progression ; each stage creating its own antagonism which negates it, at the same time creating a new and higher stage. Hegel called this kind of evolution the *dialectical process*, and the three stages he named the *positive* (or *thesis*), the *negation* (or *antithesis*), and the *negation of negation* (or *synthesis*).

Marx adheres to this formula and regards the Hegelian dialectics as a true statement of the formal process of evolution, but in the place of the Idea he puts the economic forces as the predominant dynamic agency of human society and its history. He argues : " What else does the history of ideas prove, than that intellectual production changes its character in proportion as material production is changed ? The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class. When people speak of ideas that revolutionise society they do but express the fact that within the old society the elements of a new one have been created, and that the dissolution of the old ideas keeps even pace with the dissolution of the conditions of existence. When the ancient world was in its last throes, the ancient religions were overcome by Christianity. When Christian ideas succumbed in the eighteenth century to rationalist ideas, feudal society fought its death-battle with the then revolutionary bourgeoisie. The ideas of religious liberty and freedom of conscience, merely gave expression to the sway of free competition

[1] Marx has nowhere given a systematic view of his sociology. The only attempt he ever made in this respect is to be found in the Preface to his *Critique of Political Economy*, 1859 (German). Aphoristic remarks on the subject are scattered in *Misère de la Philosophie*, 1847, *Communist Manifesto*, 1848, and in footnotes to the *Capital*, etc.

within the domain of knowledge." [1] Or again: "It is not the consciousness of man that determines his social existence, but quite the reverse; it is his social existence that determines his consciousness." [2]

(*b*) *Class struggle and its meaning.*

Since the rise of private property, society has been divided into classes. Marx classifies the various elements of society according to their economic characteristics, since the economic factor is of commanding influence. A class is a group of persons who draw their means of livelihood from the same economic source. Modern society is, in the main, divided into two classes. The groups of persons whose source of living is labour-power constitute the working-class; the groups of persons whose source of living is property (soil, houses, mines, factories, means of transport, commercial concerns) form the capitalist class. The fact that some members of the working-class draw dividends from their co-operative stores and copartnerships or interest from the savings bank, or that members of the capitalist class draw an income from payments and fees for superintendence, organising activity, or directorship, does not invalidate the classification, for, on the whole, the workman's main interest turns upon wages as the price of his labour power, while the main interest of the capitalist centres round his property and its profits. Of course, anyone is at liberty to classify society into other groups; he may classify it into good and bad, philistine and artist, white and black, etc.; but he must show that such classifications have a decisive effect on the development and dynamics of social life.

Society, then, consists, according to Marx, of two classes, one possessing labour-power only, the other the means of production. Between these two classes there is an irreconcilable opposition of interests. The opposition is, before all, of an economic nature. The wage-workers, as the possessors of labour power, desire to sell their only commodity for as high a price (wage) as possible,

[1] *Communist Manifesto*, English edition, 1888, pp. 20–21.
[2] *Kritik der Politischen Oekonomie*, 1859, preface.

while the possessors of capital endeavour to buy it for as low a price as possible. This opposition, being economic, is fundamental, but has, at first, no revolutionary influence on the mentality of the working classes. It is, apparently, an opposition like any other in civil life, between buyers and sellers of any commodity. At bottom, however, the difference is very great, for the possessor of the commodity labour-power is not in a position to bargain; if he does not sell his commodity he starves. The possessor of capital is thus able to starve the labourer into submission. The possession of capital reveals itself as a social power of the first magnitude.

This opposition and manifestation, which even Adam Smith clearly perceived, leads at first to the organisation of trade unions or to the incipient stage of class antagonism. There occur trade disputes and industrial conflicts, but these need not and will not assume the character of a class war, unless and until the working class recognise that their precarious condition is not incidental and transitory, but an inevitable effect of the capitalist system of society; that their economic inferiority cannot be mended as long as that system prevails; and, finally, that that system can be superseded by a different one, in which the means of production are in the control and possession of the whole society. In other words: only when the working-class learn to think socialistically do their sporadic and isolated disputes and trade union activities develop into a class war. The conviction is borne upon them that they cannot attain freedom and equality within the existing order of society, and that socialism only can emancipate them.

Even if that stage of mental development is reached, the working class will not pursue the struggle any further if they have not gained the consciousness that they are able or have got the power to achieve this emancipation themselves, and therefore look for some philanthropic saviour, for some heroic personality, to do for them what they think they cannot achieve by their own efforts. This was really the case at the beginning of the socialist movement, when the leaders of the working-classes saw quite clearly that the only way out of the social misery was the socialist

mode of production, when the masses felt this is to be the road to their salvation, but were too weak to take their case into their own hands. That period was, according to Marx, the utopian stage of proletarian development. It was the time of Robert Owen in Great Britian, of Fourier in France, of the establishment of communist colonies in America, of many experiments with labour-exchanges and currency reforms. The Utopian stage was overcome through the economic development itself. With the growth and expansion of the capitalist system the working-class grew in numbers, strength, organising capacity, political importance, and self-consciousness. Particularly the concentration of industry gave them the power to paralyse, through mass strikes, the whole fabric of civilised life, and to make the whole society realise that living labour-power was the soul of the whole social system. Moreover, the development of the capitalist system itself called the productive forces into being, and created forms of industrial organisation which rendered the transition to socialism easier than ever before. The Utopian stage was thus overcome, and a scientific view of social developments and socialist possbiilities was gained. To interpret this development and to bring it home to the working class was the mission of Marx. To that mission he devoted his life. It was his life-long endeavour to make the working-class conscious of their power, aims, and means. When they had grasped that, they, impelled by their own interests and conditions of life, must take up the task of achieving socialism, their class war would lose all pettiness, all hesitation, all half-way measures, and would assume the character of a straight-aiming revolutionary struggle for their complete emancipation, for economic freedom, and equality of all.

The class war, far from being, as the Utopians thought, an impediment to socialism, was its most efficient locomotive. It was an integral part of the dialectical process of history. A glance at the evolution of European civilisation from the middle ages to the present day would confirm it. The feudal stage of society, impelled by its own economic necessities, promoted trade and commerce, and gave rise to a trading and commercial

class, which gradually turned antagonistic to its parent, and out of the destruction of feudalism built up a capitalist society. The contests between manor and city, the conflicts between feudal usages and canon law on the one hand, and commercial law and trading interests on the other, not only were necessary, but contributed to the strengthening of the new rising class and to the awakening of their self-consciousness. The capitalist society, in its turn, was producing forces which were antagonistic, hostile, and subversive of its existence. It brought a propertyless working class into being, which, through the concentration of the means of production by Capital and the annihilation of the independent producers through the centralising factory system and the growth of the industrial concentration, was gaining in coherency, discipline, combination, and class consciousness. And this working class was necessarily antagonistic to the capitalist system, since the interests of Labour and Capital were absolutely opposed to and destructive of each other. Hence the class warfare, which was an inexorable historic necessity and an efficient instrument for the negation of capitalism and the furtherance of all new economic tendencies which were making for collective production and for social control of the means of production. Class warfare formed a revolutionary act of the utmost importance. The negating and recreating force of the last stages of capitalist society was the working class, whose vital interests were bound up with the abolition of capitalist control and with the transfer of the means of production to the whole society. Capitalism had destroyed production on a small scale by independent proprietors and rendered a return to the pre-capitalist form of production impossible. Now was the time to break the last chains of the institutions of private property and to expropriate the handful of the capitalist magnates in favour of the whole people. The working class was no more a motley of labouring poor, or a mob of helpless people, but a fighting class of producers—the master-builders of a new and higher stage of human society.

(c) *Evolution of Capitalism.*

From social philosophy Marx turned to economics, since our mental life was "nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, translated into forms of thought." [1] He then devoted some fifteen years of his life to the writing of the *Capital* (three volumes of about 700 printed pages each), the purpose of which was to analyse capitalist society, to show its genesis, its inner working, and its outcome, in the light he received from Hegel, Ricardo, and the British anti-capitalist school of 1820 to 1840. Marx had the ambition to continue and to accomplish the task left by those writers and by Chartism, or to discover the predominant dynamic laws governing modern society. His work deals with "the system of capitalist production which is based on the fact that the workman sells his labour-power as a commodity" (*Capital*, English edition, 1888, vol. i., p. 431). Following Ricardo he assumed that living labour only produced value, and that wages were the remuneration for the expenditure of labour power, and that wages and profit stood inversely to each other. Marx further assumed, with Ravenstone, Gray, Hodgskin, and Bray that capital was unproductive, and that profit, rent, and interest sprang from surplus-value or from that portion of the value produced by manual and mental labour which was not paid for and which was appropriated by the capitalist. This unpaid or embezzled or extorted labour was the main source of capital, hence the passion of the capitalist for surplus value.[2] This all-absorbing passion was the motive

[1] Marx, *Capital*, preface to the second German edition, 1883.

[2] The surplus-value extorted from the workmen does not flow directly to the employer, but is apportioned as profit, by means of competition, among the whole class of capitalists, according to their individual investments. Hence it follows that the surplus-value produced by the individual factory may considerably vary from the rate of profit which the individual employer as a member of the capitalist class receives under the operation of competition. However, the total amount of profit, interest, and rent, which accrues to the possessing classes, is equal to the aggregate amount of the surplus value extorted from Labour in the various workshops, factories, mines, and fields.

power of the capitalist class. In his striving for surplus-value, the capitalist imposed long hours upon the workpeople, and on their finally rebelling against health-destroying overwork, he searched for new methods of exploitation. In this search he introduced division of labour, closer co-operation of the hands in the workshops, better tools, more economic organisation of the process of production. On these methods proving inadequate to break the resistance of Labour, science was called in, machinery was invented which made the workers more amenable to workshop discipline, and displaced many by woman and child labour. The impulse thus given to science and technology was enormous ; the workshop grew into a mechanical factory, the factory into a congeries of workshops. Work became automatic and intense ; this intensification more than compensated for the reduction of the working hours. The displaced workpeople formed a reserve-army to be called in in times of strike or in periods of prosperity, in order to enable capital to cope with the sudden extension of the markets. In this process the handicraftsmen and small masters were eliminated and thrown into the proletariate. Moreover, since it was manual and mental labour-power only that created value, and since machinery reduced the amount of living labour-power *per* commodity, the value of the commodity sank and with it the surplus-value or profit *per* commodity. Hence the tendency of the rate of profit to sink. With a view to compensate for the reduction of profit the employer extended production on an even larger scale, raised his capital, looked for more profitable markets, brought his machinery to the highest pitch of perfection in order to intensify and speed up labour, and to extort from it the last ounce of surplus value. Such a reconstruction and adaptation was only possible for big capitalists, while the smaller ones were forced to give up the struggle and humbly leave the field to the giants of industry. Concentration of capital grew apace, and in the same proportion its power. This expropriation is accomplished by the immanent laws of capitalist production itself, by the centralisation of capital. One capitalist always kills many. " Hand in hand with this expropriation of many capitalists by few develop, on an ever-

extending scale, the co-operative form of the labour-process, the conscious technical application of science, the methodical cultivation of the soil, the transformation of the instruments of labour into instruments of labour only usable in common, the economising of all means of production by their use as the means of production of combined, socialised labour, the entanglement of all nations into the net of the world-market, and with this, the international character of the capitalist régime. Along with the constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital, who usurp and monopolise all advantages of this process of transformation, grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation ; but with this, too, grows the revolt of the working-class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organised by the very mechanism of the process of production itself. The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production which has sprung up, and flourished with and under it. Centralisation of the means of production and socialisation of labour at last reach a point when they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated " (*Capital*, vol. i., p. 788–789).

This is, of course, the social revolution. The victorious proletariate rises to political supremacy, and constitutes itself the nation. Its main task is now to transform the institutions and the laws in conformity with the social revolution. This can only be accomplished by the dictatorship of the proletariate. " The transition from capitalism to socialism will have as its political organ the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariate."[1] It will use its political supremacy, to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State, *i.e.* of the proletariate organised as the ruling class, and to increase the total productive forces as rapidly as possible. " Of course, in the beginning, this cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads on the

[1] Marx, *Letter to the German Social Democratic Leaders*, in 1875. Published in *Neue Zeit* (Stuttgart), 1891, No. 19; 1906–07, II, p. 164.

rights of property and on the conditions of capitalist production, by means of measures, therefore, which appear economically insufficient and untenable, but which, in the course of the movement, outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old social order, and are unavoidable as a means of entirely revolutionising the mode of production." [1]

Those are, in the shortest possible compass, the teachings of Marx.

It is impossible not to admire the enormous erudition and synthetic energy and intense labour embodied in his writings. He is, next to Plato and Thomas More, the greatest intellect in the annals of socialist thought. One feels mentally invigorated by a study of his works. They form an excellent intellectual discipline, particularly on their historical side.[2] His real achievement is not to be found in his economics, nor mainly in his sociology, but in his appreciation of the movement of the working class. He was the first socialist who grasped the importance and rôle of the proletariate. As to his errors, we may repeat here what we said concerning Adam Smith and David Ricardo, that the errors of great minds are but a degree less instructive than their truths.[3] There is much in Marx's works that is capable of stimulating thought and enlarging our outlook. There must be indeed something very vital in them, considering the fact that after so many refutations of their theories they are still the guiding star of the international revolutionary movement, which the world has now seriously to reckon with.

3.—ADDRESS AND RULES

The meeting of September 28, 1864, was held at St. Martin's Hall, Long Acre, London. It was convened by George Odger,

[1] Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, English edition, 1888, p. 21.

[2] As an introduction to the study of Marx may serve—*The Communist Manifesto*, 1848; the preface to *Critique of Political Economy*, 1859; *Capital*, Vol. I., chap. 32; *The Civil War in France*, 1871, chap. 3.

[3] *Cf. supra*, Part II., p. 199.

Randall Cremer, and other leaders of the London artisans. Professor Edward Spencer Beesly was in the chair. The crowded meeting elected a provisional committee, consisting of London trade union leaders, old Chartists, Owenites, and others, to draw up a declaration of principles and rules. Drafts were subsequently prepared by a Mazzinian and an Owenite respectively, but failed to pass. Finally, Marx wrote the declaration of principles in the form of an *Address to the Working Classes*,[1] and also laid down the rules, which were carried unanimously. Both the Address and the Rules are written in the spirit of Chartism, in the traditions of which the founders of the International Working Men's Association (I.W.M.A.) had grown up. Marx's ideas of working class politics were largely in harmony with those of Chartism, and his plan was to turn the I.W.M.A. into a nucleus organisation for the renewal of Chartism on a theoretical basis. Marx was a great admirer of the British working classes, of whom he thought that they but needed the capacity for generalisation in order to assume the leadership of the international Labour movement. He believed their greatest weakness to consist in their bent for empiricism, for fragmentary views and half-measures. He, therefore, threw himself heart and soul into the work of the I.W.M.A. in order to imbue it with a theoretical spirit.

In his Address, Marx reminded the working classes that notwithstanding the unprecedented growth of trade and commerce in the years from 1845 to 1864, the condition of Labour had not improved. In 1850, a moderate organ of the British middle classes, of more than average information, predicted that if the foreign trade of the United Kingdom were to rise 50 per cent. British pauperism would disappear. On April 7, 1864, the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. William Gladstone) delighted his Parliamentary audience with the statement that the total foreign trade of the United Kingdom had grown in 1863 to nearly £444,000,000, which sum represented about three times the trade of 1843. With all that he was eloquent on poverty.

[1] This document is known as the *Inaugural Address*. A copy of it, probably the only one extant, is to be found in " George Howell's Collection " in the Bishopsgate Public Library, London, E.C.

In nine cases out of ten, human life was but a bare struggle for existence. "The intoxicating augmentation of wealth and power is entirely confined to the propertied classes."

Marx then went on to amplify this striking sentence by adducing facts and figures, all extracted from official reports, and to paint a lurid background to Mr. Gladstone's financial statement, from all of which he drew the inevitable conclusion that the rich were getting richer, and the poor poorer. Land and capital were undergoing a process of concentration; the land question, in particular, was getting singularly simplified, as it had become in the Roman Empire, when Nero grinned at the discovery that half the province of Africa was owned by six gentlemen. Everywhere the great mass of the working classes were sinking to a lower depth of misery at the same rate at least that those above them were rising in the social scale. In all countries of Europe it had become a truth demonstrable to every unprejudiced mind that no improvement in machinery, no application of science to industry, no new contrivance of transport, no emigration, no opening of new markets, no free trade, nor all those factors put together, could do away with the misery of the productive classes, but that on the present false basis every fresh development of the productive powers of labour must needs tend to deepen the social contrasts and aggravate the social contradictions and conflicts. Death by starvation rose almost to the rank of a social institution, during that intoxicating epoch of industrial progress, in the metropolis of the British Empire. That epoch was marked in the annals of the world by the quickened recurrence, the widening compass, and the deadlier effects of that social pest called a commercial crisis.

Against that misery the generation o Chartism had been battling with most admirable perseverance for thirty years, and finally succeeded in getting the Ten Hours day, which led to an immense improvement, physical, moral, and intellectual, of British Labour. But there was something more in that triumph. The political economists had predicted that that measure would sound the death-knell of British industry. Capitalism, it appeared, could but live by sucking the blood of children,

sacrificed to the blind rule of supply and demand. Instead of blind rule the Chartists had urged that production should be controlled by social foresight and humane considerations. "The Ten Hours Bill was, therefore, not only a great practical measure; it was a victory of a principle; it was the first time that in broad daylight the political economy of the middle classes succumbed to the political economy of the working class." A still greater victory was co-operative production undertaken by the despised "hands"; they had shown, as Robert Owen had taught them, that the capitalist was by no means an indispensable factor of production. At the same time experience had proved that co-operative labour, if kept within the narrow circle of the casual efforts of private workmen, would never be able to arrest the growth in geometrical progression of monopoly, nor even perceptibly to lighten the burden of their miseries and wrongs. It had, therefore, become the great duty of the working classes to conquer political power and to make use of the machinery of the State to promote their interests. One element of success they possessed—numbers; but numbers weighed only in the national balance of power if united by combination and led by knowledge. This thought prompted the working men of different countries who had assembled on September 28, 1864, in public meeting at St. Martin's Hall, to found the I.W.M.A. Yet another consideration had swayed that meeting. If the emancipation of the working classes required their international concurrence, how were they to fulfil that great mission in the face of a foreign policy in pursuit of evil designs, playing upon nationalist and racial prejudices and squandering in piratical wars the people's blood and treasure? "This has taught the working classes the duty to master the mysteries of international politics, to watch the diplomatic acts of their respective governments, to counteract them, if necessary, by all means in their power, and, when unable to prevent, to assemble in simultaneous demonstrations and to vindicate the simple laws of morality and justice, which ought to govern the relations of private individuals as well as the intercourse of nations. To fight for such a foreign policy forms a part of the general struggle for

the emancipation of the working classes. Workmen of all countries, unite!"

The style and substance of the Address have a strong Chartist flavour, for Marx was indeed a Chartist, but equipped with a philosophical, economic, and political knowledge, to which no British Chartist could have laid claim.

The Rules he laid down were essentially as follows:

"The emancipation of the working classes must be achieved by the working classes themselves. The struggle for that emancipation means not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies, but for equal rights and duties, and the abolition of all class rule. The economic subjection of the man of labour to the monopoliser of the means of production or the sources of life is the foundation of servitude in all its forms, of all social misery, mental degradation, and political dependence. The economic emancipation of the working classes is, therefore, the great end to which every political movement ought to be subordinated as a means. The emancipation of labour is neither a local nor a national, but a social, problem, embracing all countries in which modern society exists, and depending for its solution on the concurrence, practical and theoretical, of the most advanced countries."

To arrange for such an international concert of Labour and to form a vitalising and guiding centre of working class activities was the task of the I.W.M.A. Marx advised the workmen to organise independent labour parties, to demand in Parliament social reform and factory legislation, to oppose all bellicose diplomacy, but to carry on a relentless class war, until they had conquered political power and nationalised the means of production.

4.—ACTIVITY AND FAILURE OF THE INTERNATIONAL

The I.W.M.A. held annual congresses in London, 1865, in Geneva in 1866, in Lausanne in 1867, in Brussels in 1868, in Berne, 1869, and in The Hague in 1872, when the organisation was practically dissolved. At first many British trade union leaders joined the I.W.M.A., among them being Henry Broadhurst, Robert Applegarth, George Odger,

Robert Hartwell, W. Randall Cremer, George Howell, but after the passing of the second Reform Bill the British unions gradually withdrew their support, although the General Council of the I.W.M. contained up to the end a majority of British members. The affiliation of many French, Swiss, German, Belgian, Italian, and Russian organisations turned the congresses into arenas of warring doctrines and sects, which, whilst in general agreement as to the socialist aim, were at loggerheads with regard to policy and method, the main cleavage being the question of parliamentarism. Marx and his adherents advocated parliamentary action, while many of the French, Italian, Spanish, and Russian representatives were either for revolutionary economic action or secret conspiracies for the purpose of insurrection. Marx himself, in emphasising the superiority of economics to politics, and in attempting to permeate the working classes with the view that the real source of all social evils was the monopoly of the means of production, unwittingly contributed to the strengthening of the anti-parliamentary tendencies that existed among the Owenites, Proudhonites, and Anarchists. His economic interpretation of history was, of course, the chief reason of his strong leaning towards economic action, but the idea prevalent at that time that the failure of Chartism was mainly due to its one-sided political agitation must also have induced him to redress the balance by giving increasing weight to the economic and social side of the Labour movement. Marx was undoubtedly an advocate of revolutionary trade unionism, as may be seen from a resolution which he drafted for the congress of the I.W.M.A., held at Geneva in 1866 :—

Trade Unions.—(1) Capital is concentrated social power, whereas the workman possesses nothing but his individual labour power. The contract between Labour and Capital can, therefore, not be based on equitable conditions, even in the sense of a society which ranges the possessors of all material conditions on one side, and the living productive forces on the other. The only social power on the side of the workmen is their number. This power of numbers, however, is dispersed and weakened through discord. The dispersion of the social power of Labour

is caused and maintained by the inevitable competition for a job. Trade unionism originated from the voluntary attempts of the workmen to resist the despotic behests of Capital and to prevent, or at least to keep in check, the mutual competition for an opportunity to labour, in order to obtain such conditions as would raise them above the level of simple slavery. The immediate aim of trade unionism is, for this reason, confined to the daily contests between Labour and Capital, or, in short, to wages and hours of labour. These activities of the trade unions are not only legitimate, but absolutely necessary; they cannot be dispensed with as long as the present system prevails. Moreover, they must be made general through an alliance of the workers of all countries. The trade unions have, however, unconsciously created centres of gravity for the whole working class, very much like the mediaeval guilds and corporations for the burgess class. If the trade unions, in their former capacity, are absolutely indispensable for the daily or guerilla warfare between Labour and Capital, they are, in their other capacities, all the more important as organised bodies for the abolition of wage-labour and of the capitalist domination.

(2) The trade unions have hitherto paid too much attention to the immediate disputes with Capital. They have not yet fully understood their mission against the existing system of production. They have kept aloof from the general social and political movement.

(3) Without flinching from their daily struggle against the encroachments of the capitalists, the trade unions must now learn consciously to act as the *foci* of the working classes, in the interest of their complete emancipation. They must support every social and political movement which has this aim in view; they should regard themselves as the champions and representatives of the whole class and carefully concern themselves with the interests of the unskilled or badly-paid workers, who on account of their miserable conditions are incapable of any organised resistance. Such actions will inevitably attract the great mass of unorganised workers and fill them with the conviction that the trade unions, far from being engaged in the pursuit of narrow,

selfish interests, are working for the emancipation of the downtrodden millions."

The heroic and social revolutionary part which Marx assigned to the trade unions as the centres of economic action, and the subordination of parliamentary action as a means, were eagerly accepted by the anarchist and anti-parliamentary adherents of the I.W.M.A., who soon eliminated the subordinate means and laid stress on the main propositions. The result was an ever-deepening and widening conflict between Marx and his friends, on the one hand, and the Proudhonites, Owenites, and the Anarchists on the other. And when, in the course of the controversy, the theoretical considerations and differences were lost sight of, and suspicion, obloquy, and vituperation became the main weapons of the two opposing camps, the conflict broke out in all its fury and shattered the frail bark that had been launched in September, 1864. The various societies composing the I.W.M.A. separated and led for several years an obscure existence, until they completely disappeared.

The British Section issued, in March, 1872, a manifesto, which was quite in harmony with the Address which Marx had written in 1864, but with the following addition of principles: "The produce of labour ought to belong to the producer; the brotherhood of Labour should be the basis of society; the workers of all countries should unite for the emancipation of Labour and for the abolition of all class rule; Labour is of no country, for everywhere are they suffering from the same evils." The manifesto was signed by George Bennett, J. T. Blair, Alex. Clark, Thomas S. Sanders. In July, 1872, a national congress was held at Nottingham to consider the political situation and to adopt a definite programme for the federation. It was resolved to form a new political party, by means of which the workers could achieve their emancipation. A programme, drawn up by John Hales, Tyler, and G. B. Clark, contained the following demands; adult suffrage; proportional representation; free, compulsory, and secular education—primary, secondary, technical, and university; disestablishment and disendowment of all State Churches; abolition of hereditary titles and privileges and of

unpaid justices of the peace; self-government for Ireland and a federal constitution for the British Empire; nationalisation of land, mines, and the means of production; establishment of a State Bank with a monopoly of note issue.[1]

The British Section of the I.W.M.A. lingered for some time and expired from exhaustion. The working classes had definitely abandoned all socialist agitation and class warfare, and not even the genius of Marx could bring them back to Chartism.

The improvement of the conditions of the skilled workmen in the years from 1846 onwards could not have failed to contribute to their appeasement. In the period from 1846 to 1866 money wages as well as real wages rose, as a result of the expansion of trade and the repeal of the corn-laws. According to Robert Dudley Baxter, whose social statistics are generally regarded as reliable, the population in 1867 amounted in round numbers to 30 millions, of whom 10 millions were men, women, and children depending on wages. The national income amounted to 814 million pounds sterling, out of which 325 million pounds fell to the share of the wage-workers, or in round numbers £30 per head of the working classes. These figures are averages. It may therefore be assumed that the organised workers in the staple industries obtained appreciably more than £30 a year. In comparison with the decades 1815 to 1845 such incomes meant a substantial amelioration.[2]

The reaction from the revolutionary idealism of the Chartist period was complete. The old Chartist, Thomas Cooper, who toured the North of England in 1869 and 1870 in the capacity of an evangelical preacher, found the working men there in a better material condition than in the years 1840–45, but he "noticed with pain that their moral and intellectual condition had deteriorated. . . . In our old Chartist time, it is true, Lancashire working men were in rags by thousands; and many of them lacked food. But their intelligence was demonstrated wherever you went. You would see them in groups discussing

[1] G. B. Clark, *Recollections of the International*, in *Socialist Review*, July-September, 1914, p. 253.

[2] Robert D. Baxter, *National Income*, 1868.

the great doctrine of political justice . . . or they were in earnest dispute respecting the teachings of socialism. *Now*, you will see no such groups in Lancashire. But you will hear well-dressed working men talking of co-operative stores, and their shares in them, or in building societies. And you will see others, like idiots, leading small greyhound dogs, covered with cloth, in a string! They are about to race, and they are betting money as they go! . . . Working men had ceased to think, and wanted to hear no thoughtful talk; at least, it was so with the greater number of them. To one who has striven, the greater part of his life, to instruct and elevate them, and who has suffered and borne imprisonment for them, all this was more painful than I care to tell." [1]

After 1867 Marx expressed similar opinions of the British working classes, but he never accused the masses. His quarrel was with their leaders, whom he charged with being in the pay partly of Mr. Gladstone and partly of Mr. Disraeli. However, we shall never understand the mental state of British Labour in the period from 1850 onwards if we ignore the severe crises through which they passed in the years 1832, 1834–5, 1839–40, 1842 and 1848.

5.—LIBERAL LABOUR ORGANISATIONS

Between the years 1866 and 1895 there existed three political organisations, whose object it was to obtain parliamentary representation of Labour; the London Working Men's Union (1866–8), the Labour Representation League (1869–80), and the Labour Electoral Association (1886–95). They had nothing to do with independent political action. Their dominant idea was rather as follows: Parliament, in its debates and legislation affecting labour questions, required certain technical knowledge and experience which only Labour leaders could possess; it was therefore necessary to send some of these men to Parliament.

The Trades Union Congress which originated in 1868 and is still in full vigour, belongs to the same category of organisations,

[1] Thomas Cooper, *Life*, ed. 1897, p. 393–4.

its aim being to watch over the political interests of the organised working men. Its organ is the Parliamentary Committee, elected annually by the Congress for the purpose of carrying its political resolutions into effect, either by sending deputations to the Secretaries of State or by lobbying—by interviewing Members of Parliament who are in sympathy with Labour.

In February, 1866, the London Working Men's Union came into being. According to its programme the Union declared not merely in favour of universal suffrage, but for the direct parliamentary representation of working men for working men. Its secretary was Robert Hartwell, an old Chartist, who, as we may recall to mind, had presided over the great meeting of February 28, 1837, at which the movement for the People's Charter was set on foot. Hartwell made strenuous efforts to lead the new generation back to Chartist ideas. The Union, however, adopted his resolutions without carrying them into effect.

At the parliamentary elections of 1868 several Labour leaders came forward as candidates, among them being George Odger, president of the General Council of the I.W.M.A., Randall Cremer, formerly secretary of the same body, and Hartwell. Odger and Hartwell retired before the polling day, while Cremer obtained only 260 votes against 873 Liberal and 863 Conservative votes.[1]

The London Working Men's Union then disappeared from the scene and its place was taken by the Labour Representative League, which set itself the task of "avoiding Utopian theories and illusory phantoms and of bringing the interests of the working men into harmony with those of the whole of society." The league was evidently founded in opposition to the I.W.M.A. At the beginning of 1870 a parliamentary by-election had to take place at Southwark. The League's candidate was Odger, who was supported by J. S. Mill. He went to the poll and received 4,382 votes against 4,686 Conservative and 2,966 Liberal votes. This result, combined with the agitation of Labour for the legalisation of trade unionism, gave the League an impetus and made it for a time an influential political body.

[1] A. W. Humphrey, *History of Labour Representation*, 1912, p. 26

It reached its highwater mark in 1874, when twelve Labour candidates were put forward, of whom, however, only the miners' leaders, Alexander Macdonald and Thomas Burt, were successful. The Liberals suffered defeat, and the Conservatives formed a Government under the leadership of Disraeli, who carried a trade union bill which satisfied the organised working classes. The League then declined, but the Trade Union Congress continued to pass resolutions for the increased parliamentary representation of Labour. These resolutions became hardy annuals which were moved and carried mechanically. At the general election of 1880 three Labour candidates were successful: Burt, Macdonald, and Broadhurst.

At the Trades Union Congress in 1885 the idea of forming a Labour Party was revived. During the years 1881 to 1885 the Social Democratic Federation, the Fabian Society and the Socialist League had come into existence and agitated in favour of socialism. The industrial depression also gave rise to much dissatisfaction in the ranks of Labour. These influences combined to create a desire for a more vigorous attitude of Labour in Parliament. In 1886, when as many as ten working men sat in Parliament, the Labour Electoral Association was formed. Its principles were formulated at the Trades Union Congress of 1886, by T. R. Threlfall in the following resolution:—

"This Congress views with satisfaction the growing intelligence of the masses to recognise in their emancipation the power they possess to demand the inalienable right of men in making laws to which they have to subscribe; and in order to give practical effect to the various resolutions passed at previous Congresses on the question of Labour Representation it is essential to form an Electoral Labour Committee which shall act in conjunction with the Parliamentary Committee, the Labour Representatives in the House of Commons, and the friends of Labour Representation throughout the country."

In the same resolution Threlfall gave an outline of such an organisation, and the whole was carried by an overwhelming majority. The Labour Electoral Association worked from the outset in conjunction with the Liberal organisations, opposing

socialist and independent Labour action. The weakness of Liberalism in those years and its defeat in 1895 proved fatal to the Labour Electoral Association. Before it expired the working men had already returned fifteen of their leaders to Parliament, including J. Keir Hardie and John Burns, who were elected in 1892, the former running as an independent Labour man, the latter as a social democrat. The terms " socialism " and " social reform " had lost well-nigh all terror in the eyes of Labour, and in the years from 1893 onwards it was an easy matter to carry at Trades Union Congresses social reform and even orthodox socialist resolutions. But the idea of Labour independence, directed alike against Liberals and Conservatives, was regarded by the bulk of trade unionists as the acme of revolutionary thought, as the most repellent expression of class warfare.

It would, however, be a mistake to conclude from the adoption of socialist resolutions by the Trades Union Congresses that British organised Labour had embraced socialism. There is no such thing to-day as a miraculous or wholesale conversion of masses by fiery speeches or decrees of assemblies. The favourable reception of those resolutions merely indicated that the working men were inclined to promote social reform through legislation. They knew that the socialist objective could never be embodied in a Bill to which the parties would have to adopt a definite attitude ; it was not practical politics and, therefore, not worth while opposing it and provoking long debates as to the feasibility of a sudden transformation of society. On the other hand, an independent labour party, in opposition both to Liberals and Conservatives, was an important living issue which could not be decided by a Congress resolution.

XII

REVIVAL OF SOCIALISM

I.—EXHAUSTION OF LIBERAL THOUGHT

In the chapter dealing with the general characteristics of the last sixty years it has been pointed out that about the year 1880 Liberal thought found itself in the throes of a crisis. The conviction was beginning to gain in strength and volume that Liberalism was not in a position to perform what it had promised. The condition of the country was not satisfactory either in foreign or home affairs. The depression of trade grew worse and swelled the number of the unemployed. The political movement of the working classes, the appearance of trade union representatives in the House of Commons (1874), the organising efforts of the agricultural labourers, were regarded by the ruling classes as the beginnings of a new period of class warfare. Meredith's *Beauchamp's Career* (1875) mirrors the feelings and misgivings, as well as the hopes and longings of the incipient social rebellion: "The people are the Power to come. Oppressed, unprotected, abandoned; left to the ebb and flow of the tides of the market, now taken on to work, now cast off to starve, committed to the shifting laws of demand and supply, slaves of Capital—the whited name for old accursed Mammon; and of all the ranked and black-uniformed host no pastor to come out of the association of shepherds, and proclaim before heaven and man the primary claim of their cause;—they are, I say, the power, worth the seduction of by another Power not mighty in England now: and likely in time to set up yet another Power not existing in England now." [1]

Another symptom of the decay of liberal thought was the assault on free trade. The movement in favour of fair trade came into being. Historians went to work to revise the liberal

[1] George Meredith, *Beauchamp's Career*, Vol. II., chap. 1.

views of empire and international relations. Professor Seeley's *Expansion of England* evoked an enthusiasm which would have been quite impossible a decade earlier. Ireland grew more determined to press her claim for Home Rule to a successful issue. Parnell on the political side, Michael Davitt on the social economic side, deployed their forces against the Union. The coercive measures employed by the Liberal Government against the Irish roused much dissatisfaction in the Radical ranks. The war against Egypt, the South African tangle, and the situation in India and Afghanistan, deepened the discontent of all the Radical elements in Great Britain. The failure of Liberal governance, the exhaustion and impotence of Liberal thought could no longer be concealed.

It was, therefore, quite natural that the orthodox political economy, the ideology of Liberalism, should be assailed. And the converging assault came from the Marxists, the land reformers, and the new school of social science. J. S. Mill, Alfred Russel Wallace, David Syme, Cliffe Leslie, J. K. Ingram, H. M. Hyndman, Sidney Webb, Belfort Bax, who, while belonging to various schools of social economics, were endeavouring each in his own way to create new currents of thought calculated to favour either social reform or the social revolution.

2.—MARX AND HYNDMAN

Turning our mental gaze retrospectively on those years we see H. M. Hyndman, Belfort Bax, Sidney Webb, William Morris, George B. Shaw, busily engaged in their investigations and re-examinations. Visits were paid to Karl Marx; Mill's writings received new attention; Henry George was acclaimed; the old Chartist pamphlets and periodicals were diligently studied, and the activities of the German social democracy closely examined. These were stirring years of disquisition and discussion, the charm of which can only be imagined by those who, after having wrestled with doubt and uncertainty, finally arrive at a working hypothesis.

Marx's doctrines were only accessible to those Englishmen who read either German or French. In 1880 two articles on

Marx appeared in English monthly magazines, one in favour of, the other in opposition to, his doctrines. The former was written by E. Belfort Bax, who, from his intercourse with the refugees of the Paris Commune and from a study of the *Capital*, had embraced socialism. At the same time Henry M. Hyndman began the study of the French edition of *Capital*, which had been recommended to him by Butler-Johnstone, the Turcophile and Conservative member of Parliament. He lost no time in making the personal acquaintance of its author and often paid him visits in order to obtain further instruction from him by word of mouth.[1]

The impression which Marx's vigorous intellect made on Hyndman was enormous and has proved indelible ; on the other hand, the impression which Hyndman left on Marx was anything but favourable. And this was due to the following circumstances. Marx, in his way, was a proud mental aristocrat, having been descended, both on his paternal and maternal sides, from a long line of Rabbis and Talmudic scholars of great repute, and he was related, by marriage, to the high Prussian bureaucracy, his wife being a Baroness Von Westphalen, a sister of the Prussian Home Secretary of the same name, and related to the Argyles. Likewise, his revolutionary past and severe persecutions at the hands of the Prussian, French, and Belgian Governments, were not calculated to assuage his temper. Finally, his enormous erudition and socialist pioneering work gave him a strong feeling of personal superiority. The late Professor Edward S. Beesly, who had known him since 1867, told me, in a conversation I had with him in the winter of 1902, at St. Leonard's, that " Marx was a walking encyclopaedia, in knowledge of history, economics, and philosophy, having had hardly any equal." And Beesly said that, after Marx had the temerity to tell him that Comte, as a thinker, was very inferior to Hegel. To that proud, self-conscious intellect, Hyndman came, as a young Roman patrician, aspiring to the tribunate, might have come to a poor expatriated Greek scholar, say a Polybios, to learn something from him about Hellenic communist movements, and to use this knowledge for

[1] H. M. Hyndman, *Record of an Adventurous Life*, Vol. I., p. 268 *et sqq.* *Cf.* Sorge's *Briefwechsel*, Stuttgart 1896, p. 180–81.

the purpose of keeping the proletariate within the folds of Roman politics, and to teach his countrymen how to avoid the revolutionary pitfalls which had proved so destructive to Hellas. Of course, Polybios, utterly tamed by Roman power, would not have objected to such a procedure. But it was quite different with Marx. Neither the Prussian State Prosecutors, nor the French Governments before and after 1848, nor English hospitality and "killing with kindness" could tame him. In the autumn, 1880, Hyndman called several times upon Marx, who gave him information about the prospects of the revolutionary movement on the Continent. Hyndman then sat down and wrote a paper under the heading, "The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch," which was published in the *Nineteenth Century* (January, 1881), and in which Marx's information was made use of in an anti-revolutionary sense. From that time onwards Marx looked with suspicion upon Hyndman, and regarded him as a news-hunting busybody. Then occurred another incident, which rendered a final breach between the two men inevitable. In June, 1881, Hyndman thought to have progressed far enough to interpret Marxism to his countrymen. He published his *England for All*, in which he embodied the essential doctrines of his master on Capital and Labour, and in the preface he stated that "for the ideas and much of the matter contained in chapter 2 and 3, I am indebted to the work of a great thinker and original writer," whose works he hoped would soon become accessible to the majority of Englishmen. Hyndman, knowing the prejudices of Englishmen against foreigners and, at that time, particularly against Marx, avoided mentioning his name and the *Capital*. But he was quite unaware of the inordinate desire of Marx for public recognition of his work. This great revolutionist had spent years of labour on the writing of *Capital;* no amount of privation, distress, and suffering would deter him from elaborating its main ideas or from searching for some recondite quotation which might support them. His whole being came finally to be bound up with the fate of his book; any one who disregarded it was sure to be looked upon by its author as a know-nothing or a weakling.

After the publication of his *England for All*, Hyndman had no chance with Marx, Engels, and their friends. He was not long in perceiving his mistake or in attempting to remove it. In 1883 he wrote his best book, *The Historical Basis of Socialism*, a comprehensive study on the origin of capitalism, the Labour movement and socialism from the fifteenth century down to the nineteenth. He quoted Marx, Engels, Rodbertus and the whole German school of socialism, but the breach between him and the German Marxists has never been completely repaired. A certain soreness has remained on both sides, which has sometimes been aggravated by the general lack of mental sympathy betwen Englishmen and Germans. Still, it is due to Hyndman that Marxism has found some footing on British soil. For, although Webb, Shaw, and Morris have also been more or less influenced or rather stimulated, by the writings of Marx, it was Hyndman who became his English disciple and spread his views in season and out of season,[1] and even created an organisation which is based on the doctrines of Marx.

For this work Hyndman was severely taken to task by the *Quarterly Review* in a paper of remarkable ability, the writer of which treated Hyndman as an incendiary.[2] But a Catiline he never was. For all his Marxism and internationalism, he has remained what he was in the 'seventies—a patrician, aspiring to the tribunate, a sort of an English Tiberius Gracchus, exhibiting the same characteristics as his Roman predecessor, who, according to the description of Appian, was a patriot, burning with zeal to see all his countrymen, the scions of a great race, well-fed, well-housed, and warlike, having a stake in their world-wide Empire, the boundaries of which they should be prepared to defend and to extend.[3]

[1] Hyndman, *op. cit.*, p. 251 *sqq.*; Archibald Henderson, *Life of G. B. Shaw*, 1911, pp. 98, 160, *sqq.*; J. W. Mackail, *Life of William Morris*, ed. 1911, Vol. II., p. 97; *Fabian Tracts*, No. 41, p. 16.

[2] *Quarterly Review*, October–December, 1883, p. 352, *sqq.*

[3] Appian, *Civil Wars*, book i., ch. 11.

3.—THE ASSAULT ON ORTHODOX POLITICAL ECONOMY

The theories propagated in Great Britain by Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and their interpreters and commentators, were essentially the ideology of the business interests of the British manufacturing and commercial classes, or what the socialists call the modern *bourgeoisie*. The cardinal error of those theorists was that they regarded man as a constant factor, that they identified him with the business man, and believed political economy to furnish an eternal model to civilised society. Man and, therefore, society were thought to have always been actuated by the desire of gain, by the wish to improve their material condition, and if left unhampered by State intervention and mediaeval traditions, they would surely attain to that happiness which everybody was striving after. The individual, sovereign and freely competing in a free market, was the centre of the universe.

The commercial crises, the distress and misery, Chartism and the general dissatisfaction gradually undermined those theories, and we saw J. S. Mill straining at the leash put upon him by his father, the orthodox interpreter of Ricardo. In the 'seventies the authority of the Ricardians was gone. A new school was arising, a school which made a great effort to make political economy one of the departments of social science or sociology, to have it looked upon only as a phase in the evolution of human society, and to subordinate the whole to ethics. This new British school of social science, whose pioneers were Ruskin, Cliffe Leslie, David Syme, J. K. Ingram, Toynbee, and Cunningham, owed its theoretic origin partly to the influence of the Christian Socialists of the earlier decades ; partly to Comte and the English Positivists ; and partly to the German historical school of Knies, Roscher, Kautz, and Schmoller. It was assisted by the spread of biological knowledge, which suggested many, though superficial, analogies between a biological organism and social life. Herbert Spencer was the pioneer of this kind of speculation in Great Britain.

John Stuart Mill formed the connecting link between the

old and the new school, for he was, as he relates in his *Autobiography*, "a mind always pressing forward, equally ready to learn either from his own thoughts or from those of others," and he learned a good deal from French socialism. His mental crisis was caused by reading its works as well as those of Comte. And Comte himself was under very great obligation to the socialists,[1] he having been the collaborator of St. Simon. John Ruskin's *Unto this Last* and *Munera Pulveris* were undoubtedly the effect of having for a time been associated with Maurice, Kingsley, and Ludlow in the 'fifties; his social economic sermons led in the same direction, though to a more definite goal than Mill's,—namely, to the subordination of the individual to society, the substitution of social service and co-operation in the place of individual gain and competition. Cliffe Leslie, who learned from the German historical school, was befriended by Mill, David Syme by Leslie, while Ingram, a Comtist himself, tried to view the history of political economy from the standpoint of his master. Many of these impulses and currents operated on Arnold Toynbee, Cunningham, Ashley, Foxwell, Hewins, and Alfred Marshall, who attempted to create a British school of economic history, directed against the orthodox political economy. The latter point is the common measure of all those factors mentioned above. The rise of this movement in all its ramifications, which took place in the United Kingdom (Leslie and Ingram were Irishmen) between 1860 and 1890, would well deserve of special treatment,[2] but we cannot do here more than indicating those features which are relevant to our subject.

Comte was introduced to the British public by the indefatigable Miss Harriet Martineau and G. H. Lewes. But it was J. S. Mill who brought Comte's influence to bear upon political economy.

[1] Cf. Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics*, third edition, p. 64.

[2] Professor W. J. Ashley, in his *Address to the British Association* at Leicester, August 1, 1907, made such an attempt, but it is very meagre and misses the historical significance of the movement. I am told that Professor Foxwell also published a paper on the subject in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Boston, 1887, but I could not get it.

While studying the *Cours de Philosophie Positive* he could not but be struck by the sneers of its author at the futile and scholastic squabbles of the political economists, on the one hand, and by his treatment of economics as a department of social science, on the other. Mill found there certain ideas which reminded him of the Germano-Coleridgian school,[1] as well as of Richard Jones. Comte showed him human society in a process of evolution, in which the various groups of phenomena were connected with one another, so that changes in one group led to modification in other groups. He further taught him that the path of social reform lay in the subordination of life to ethics, in the training of the sympathetic impulses, which, by the way, also, Adam Smith was quite aware of, when dealing not with material wealth, but with moral sentiments. The English Positivists, a very conservative body, were spreading the same views.

The German historical school, partly from their organic view of social development, partly from an antipathy against modern industrialism and unrestricted competition,—an antipathy which originated in their veneration of the State as the supreme moral authority in social life, was averse from the classical English political economy and turned to the analysis of the diverse forces which operated in the various periods of the civilised nations, and which gave rise to social problems, legislative acts, and political arrangements. Social relations, according to that school, are not a natural phenomenon, but the creation of human volition and controlled by the ethical concepts and views of man under various historical conditions. This school, for the purpose of strengthening the weak and keeping society together, favoured social reform legislation, corporate or State organisation with a view to prevent society being atomised or broken up by conflicts.

The three currents of thought—Christian socialist teachings, (as spread by Ruskin), Comtism, and German ethical and historical economics, converged in the 'seventies of the last century and affected British economics in two ways.

The one effect was the revival and prosecution of historical

[1] Cf. *supra*, Part II., p. 272–73.

and social studies, to which, in the United Kingdom itself, Jones, Maine, and Stubbs had imparted a strong impulse. The beginning of the 'eighties witnessed the publication of Cunningham's *Growth of English Industry and Commerce*, Seebohm's *Village Community*, Hyndman's *Historical Basis of Socialism*, Toynbee's *Industrial Revolution*, Belfort Bax's and William Morris's *Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome*, Booth's *London Life*, leading up to the Webbs' *History of British Trade Unionism*, *Industrial Democracy*, and other historical and social studies, connected either with the Fabian Society and the London School of Economics or with the socialist movement in general.

The other effect was a new tendency in British economic theory, which endeavoured to dethrone the orthodox political economy. The foremost representative of the new tendency was Cliffe Leslie, whose acute intellect and great learning predestined him to do for the new school what Adam Smith had done for the old one. He was, however, prevented by bad health from achieving his purpose. He only left a collection of essays and some papers in the *Fortnightly Review*, all of them exceedingly suggestive and stimulating. His leading idea was: "The whole economy of every nation . . . is the result of a long evolution in which there has been both continuity and change, and of which the economic side is only a particular aspect or phase. And the laws, of which it is the result, must be sought in history."[1] He saw the time coming when democratic legislation would intervene in directions not in accordance with the doctrines to which the interests of the great capitalists and landowners were attached. Ideas of social obligation would play a much greater part in the economic sphere than they have ever done since Adam Smith based a complete economic code on the desire of every man to better his own condition.[2]

A more systematic attempt to formulate the views of the new tendency was made by David Syme, a friend of Cliffe Leslie. His leading idea is: "The (old) economists insist that the

[1] Cliffe Leslie, *Essays in Pol. and Moral Philosophy*, Dublin and London, 1879, p. 227.

[2] *Id.*, *Fortnightly Review*, November, 1881, pp. 658–9.

individual is the best judge of his own interests. The doctrine is one that I am not disposed to dispute. All that I insist upon is that the principle should have a more general application and that society should in regard to ability of judging as to its own interests, be put upon the same footing as the individual." [1] The tone and mode of expression are quite Fabianesque. The right of society to protect its own interests would of course mean the subordination of the interests of the individual to those of the community at large. It would mean co-operation in the place of competition. Indeed, the best criticism of competition came from Syme. He anticipated the movement towards syndicates, pools, and trusts, as a result of competition. He argued: The object of the producer in engaging in any branch of industry being profit, he would naturally take all the means at his command to increase that profit to the utmost. And this was only possible if he had the whole market to himself and were not compelled to share it with others, for as a rule, the greater the amount of competition in a given market, the smaller the profit to be divided among the competitors. It would thus become the object of every competitor to reduce the number of his rivals. In other words, in order to render competition successful, a monopoly must be established, either by causing the economic death of a great number of competitors or by command of a large capital, that is by the amalgamation of the strongest competitors who refused to get killed. In that process those competitors would succeed who were not troubled with any moral principles. "Competition leads to the destruction of all morality, and nobody appears to be ashamed of it." [2] The whole economic system of to-day was such that the less consideration a man needed the more he got, and the more he needed the less was shown to him. "In the economic world honesty counts as nothing, and help comes in the inverse order of a man's needs." [3] Syme condemned the British commercial policy in India, and showed that the British commercial supremacy in the 'fifties and 'sixties was often due to dumping. Altogether, Syme's final

[1] David Syme, *Outlines of an Industrial Science*, London, 1876, p. 168. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 83. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 53.

view was that ethics was the real foundation of social science, one department of which was economics.[1]

What Syme was teaching by means of cold, clear reasoning, Ruskin was preaching with supreme moral fervour and found a large audience among the young men and women who became dissatisfied with conditions which, as Matthew Arnold then declared, had created a materialised upper class, a vulgarised middle class, and a brutalised lower class.[2] Ruskin won able followers in Patrick Geddes and John A. Hobson. Likewise on its biological and philosophical side, the new school of social science has produced some good work—Karl Pearson's *Socialism in Theory and Practice* (1884), Ritchie's *Darwinism and Politics* (1889), Bonar's *Philosophy and Political Economy* (1893). H. G. Wells, an amazingly prolific literary craftsman, who gave to the socialist movement *New Worlds for Old* (1908), started as a biologist, and J. Ramsay MacDonald, one of the leaders of the Labour Party, had a biological training.

Far less satisfactory, from the socialist point of view, has been the work of the University professors. Some of them have used the historical method to defend Protection, the tariff movement, and Imperialism; their assault on orthodox political economy has meant an assault on free trade, international peace, and socialism. Only the greatest among them, Professor Alfred Marshall, has remained true to the new school, but owing to his constitutional dread of generalisation and decisive action, his *Principles of Economics*, which ought to have been the *Novum Organum* of the British historical school, is, for all its learning, breadth of views, and mastery of method, a disappointing performance. All that has been left of the storm and stress of the 'seventies and 'eighties is a polite bow to "the ethical forces, of which the economist has to take account,"[3] a generous compliment to the German Jews for the

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 175.

[2] Matthew Arnold, *The Future of Liberalism*, in *Nineteenth Century*, July, 1880, p. 17.

[3] Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics*, third edition (Preface to the first edition).

many daring speculations as to the conflict of interests in society,[1] and an acknowledgment to the socialists, "among whose wild rhapsodies there were shrewd observations and pregnant suggestions from which philosophers and economists had much to learn."[2]

Still, from the new school of British economics have come many men and women to the socialist movement, particularly to the Fabian Society.

4.—THE INFLUENCE OF MILL AND THE LAND REFORMERS

Besides the work of the International Working Men's Association and the new economics, social criticism was kept alive in the 'sixties and 'seventies by the land reformers, and they based their theories not only on the law of nature but increasingly on economic grounds.

David Ricardo's theory of value forms the starting-point of Marxist economics, and Ricardo's theory of rent forms the foundation of the modern theories of land and taxation reform. According to Ricardo rent was the result of the general progress of civilisation, or, as Ricardo thought, of the activity of Capital, yet it only served to enrich the landlords who did nothing for the progress of mankind. Ricardo considered that the remedy lay in free trade ; as a staunch adherent of the existing state of society and of *laissez-faire*, he had no inclination whatever to tilt against the institution of private property, but rather to remove the impediments or neutralise the cross-currents which he believed were vitiating the beneficent workings of private enterprise and the operations of the inherent laws of social life. But he was succeeded by reformers who combined his theory of rent with the doctrines of laws of nature and of the rights of man, as expounded by Locke, Spence, Ogilvie, and Paine. They demanded heavy taxation of ground rent or its complete extinction by the agency of taxation or by land nationalisation.

Many social reformers went still further and formulated the demand that all incomes which bore the character of rent should

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 51 ; Marshall means evidently Marx and Lassalle.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 64.

be turned into the main source of taxation. This is the doctrine of "unearned increment," which J. S. Mill, following a suggestion of his father, worked out. For the period from 1848 to 1880 Mill was, in theory, as authoritative as Smith, Bentham, and Ricardo had been from about 1780 to 1848. He was the philosopher and political economist of the transition from *laissez-faire* to social reform. His inconsistencies and oscillations were admirably adapted to a period which was to all intents and purposes liberal, but contained elements working for a new conception of social organisation. Everybody could find in Mill's writings what he was looking for.

Mill's concept of landed property is akin to that of socialism. Such a right of property, he thought, was an expediency; it was not as "sacred" as property in movables, for "no man made the land; it is the original inheritance of the whole species."[1] Rent he considered to be the effect of a natural monopoly and a fit subject of special taxation. "Suppose," he says, "there is a kind of income which constantly tends to increase, without any exertion or sacrifice on the part of the owners; those owners constituting a class in the community, whom the natural course of things progressively enriches, consistently with complete passiveness on their own part. In such a case it would be no violation of the principles on which private property is grounded, if the State should appropriate this increase of wealth, or part of it, as it arises. This would not properly be taking anything from anybody; it would merely be applying an accession of wealth, created by circumstances, to the benefit of society, instead of allowing it to become an unearned appendage to the riches of a particular class. This is actually the case with rent. The ordinary progress of a society which increases in wealth, is at all times tending to augment the incomes of landlords. . . . They grow richer, as it were, in their sleep, without working, risking, or economising. What claim have they, on the general principle of social justice, to the accession of riches? In what would they have been wronged

[1] J. S. Mill, *Principles of Pol. Economy*, sixth ed., book II. chap. 2, § 6.

if society had, from the beginning, reserved the right of taxing the spontaneous increase of rent, to the highest amount required by financial exigencies?" The arguments advanced by Mill have been adopted by all land reformers. The remedy he proposes is taxation of land values. "The first step," he proceeds to declare, "should be a valuation of all land in the country. The present value of land should be exempt from the tax; but after an interval had elapsed, during which society had increased in population and capital, a rough estimate might be made of the spontaneous increase which had accrued to rent since the valuation was made."[1]

We shall see later on how the principle of rent and the inferences drawn from it have been applied to unearned increments of industrial and financial wealth, thus forming the basis of British social reform[2]. For the present we shall confine ourselves to the subject of ground-rent and to the reform schemes connected therewith.

Two years after the publication of Mill's *Principles* a Scottish reformer, Patrick E. Dove, developed a theory of land reform which culminated in the Single Tax scheme. He argued that the land was the heritage of mankind, and that it ought not to be turned into private property nor divided into separate holdings. Common ownership was a right principle. On the other hand, the events of 1848 had demonstrated that communism was unattainable. If, then, division and private ownership were wrong and men were not yet fit for communism, how could the use of the earth be made accessible to all? Dove replied that by means of the nationalisation of rent the income derived from this source would be sufficient to defray the expenditure of government and enable the nation to abolish all other taxes. There were but two sources of taxation, land and industry. The taxes on industry or labour, the true source of property, was robbery pure and simple; the industrious were

[1] *Ibid.*, book v., chap. 2, § 5.

[2] An indication of this line of reasoning is given *supra*, Vol. I., p. 151; compare Mill, *Principles of Pol. Economy*, book iii., chap. 5, § 4.

deprived of a portion of their property and freedom and weakened in their initiative. On the other hand, the earth was not made by man, but given to mankind for the benefit of all, and was therefore the proper source of taxation. Trade and industry, liberated from the incubus of taxation, would then be able freely to develop to the advantage of the whole nation.[1]

Dove's theory implies unrestricted competition in manufacture and commerce; freedom from taxation for the middle and working classes; and inviolability of private property as the product of personal efforts. It resembles in its results the doctrine of Thomas Spence, and it entirely anticipates Henry George's schemes.

In the post-Chartist period land reform was increasingly popular with Liberals. Even Herbert Spencer, the most anti-socialist of all political and evolutionary philosophers of the second half of the nineteenth century, could not shake himself free from these ideas.[2] In *Reynolds's Newspaper*, Bronterre O'Brien published from time to time, until his death (1864), articles on land reform, which were collected by his disciples and published in 1885 under the title *Rise and Progress of Human Slavery*. And to the present day the doctrines concerning taxation of land values, nationalisation of rent, and even of the land have found zealous advocates among politicians and reformers who decline to have anything to do with socialism. In the Land Tenure Reform Association, founded by Mill in 1870, many of the most prominent Liberal theorists and politicians worked together with social reformers and members of the International Working Men's Association, as may be seen from the following names: Professor Thorold Rogers, John Morley, Sir Henry Fawcett, Peter A. Taylor, M.P. Professor Cairnes, Professor Cliffe Leslie, Sir Charles W. Dilke, Alfred Russel Wallace, Cowell Stepney (Treasurer of the I.W.M.A.), W. Randall Cremer (first secretary of the I.W.M.A.), George Odger, Benjamin Lucraft, T. Mothershead, John Weston. Also the last mentioned four Labour leaders were members of the I.W.M.A., and repre-

[1] Patrick E. Dove, *Science of Politics*, 1850, Vol. I., p. 387.
[2] Herbert Spencer, *Social Statics*, 1851, chap. 9.

sented a large section of the working people of the metropolis. "An active and influential portion of the working classes," Mill remarks, "have adopted the opinion that private property in land is a mistake, and that the land ought to be resumed and managed on account of the State, compensation being made to the proprietors." [1]

The Land Tenure Reform Association was by no means a milk-and-water organisation. It claimed the "unearned increase of the land and the produce thereof for those who were its real authors," that is, society as a whole. It urged upon the nation to take control of the land, for "the State has exactly the same right to control it that it has to control, for instance, the railways."[2]

Similar remarks apply to the Land Law Reform Association, the Land Nationalisation Society, the English and Scottish Leagues for the Taxation of Land Values, and many other organisations which have been connected with land reform, since Mill set the movement on foot, and Henry George's lecturing tours in Great Britain and Ireland in the years 1882 and 1884 inspired it with new life. They have all been more or less Liberal but opposed to complete socialism.

How is this apparent contradiction to be explained?

Liberal political economy is based on competition, on the unrestricted efforts of the individual to promote his welfare. It presupposes equality of opportunity, equality of external advantages. All restraints of trade, all monopolies of economic goods are repugnant to it. Such restraints and monopolies ought to be mended or ended, if man is to attain to happiness and to a full development of his capacities. Land, however, is *per se* a monopoly,[3] since it cannot be multiplied and it is absolutely indispensable to human existence. If, in addition to its monopolistic nature, it is handed over, by legal monopoly, into the power of the few, a state of things is created which constitutes

[1] J. S. Mill, *Programme of the Land Tenure Reform Association*, London, 1871, pp. 6–7.
[2] *Id.*, *Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. IV., pp. 280–3, 239–88.
[3] *Id.*, *Principles of Pol. Econ.*, book ii., chap. 15. § 1.

the gravest danger to society. Land, therefore, is an economic good to which the rule of competition or liberal doctrine cannot apply. It is an exception, and must be dealt with as such. Individualism must stop short of the land; it ought to be controlled by the nation as a whole, and not by any individual or group of individuals. Land is a proper and legitimate subject of State interference. The laws and regulations proposed for this purpose have nothing to do with the system of socialism.

To these arguments the socialist may fairly reply: If the absence of competition or the existence of monopoly justified national control of the land, why should not the same arguments hold good with regard to industrial and commercial monopolies which resulted from competition? The course of modern economic life had amply demonstrated that the result of competition was not the diffusion of wealth and independence among the greatest number, but on the contrary the monopolising of the sources of life by the few,—by syndicates and trusts of multi-millionaires, and dependence and wage labour of the many. Capital was now assuming the character of a monopoly, and there would soon be no difference in this respect between capital and land.

This line of reasoning, based on Marx's theory of the concentration of capital as a result of unrestricted competition,[1] may serve as an indication of the process of transition from land reform to socialism, which actually took place in the years between 1880 and 1890, when young intellectuals and intelligent working men passed from the meetings addressed by the American land reformer, Henry George, to those addressed by H. M. Hyndman and Sidney Webb.

In 1879 Henry George published his book *Progress and Poverty*, which had a large and immediate sale. He at once gained great popularity as a reformer, as if American and British public opinion had been waiting for his coming. His fame spread to the United Kingdom, where Mill's land agitation and the Irish Land League had prepared the way for the leader of the single-tax movement. In 1882, when his book had attained a circula-

[1] This argument was brought forward independently by David Syme, as shown *supra*, p 235.

tion of about 100,000 copies in the United Kingdom, he came to London and went on a lecturing tour to Ireland. He was accompanied by J. L. Joynes, an Eton master and journalist, who later joined the Social Democratic Federation, popularised Karl Marx, and wrote revolutionary poetry. The Government, scared by the Irish unrest and the Land League agitation, had them both arrested. They were soon set at liberty, and George returned to London, where he delivered lectures on the single tax, which enjoyed much popularity.

George's book contains nothing new to English readers. Its leading ideas are natural rights, Ricardo's and Mill's theory of rent, and the schemes of Spence and Dove. But it is written in a popular and eloquent style, and therefore could not fail to attract the attention of all those who at that time were searching for theories and schemes of social reform. George argued that nowhere in the civilised world did labour receive its just wage. Everywhere was Labour haunted by unemployment. Many people ascribed these phenomena to over-production, others merely designated them as economic crises, others again thought them to be due to over-population. These explanations were wide of the mark. Over-production could not possibly exist as long as there were men suffering from hunger, wearing bad clothes, and living in ramshackle houses. There was no lack of opportunity for work, so long as so many human needs cried for satisfaction, and there were so many hands ready to create the necessary goods. The fundamental cause of the whole evil was to be sought in the fact that the people were shut off from the land, which, combined with human labour, formed the source of all wealth. The most important condition for their existence was monopolised by the few. All men came into the world with equal rights, and all had an equal right to the most indispensable source of life. Men laboured at enriching this source, and yet they were debarred from the free use of it; the more diligently they toiled in increasing the value of this source, the more it flowed into the pockets of the land monopolists who contributed nothing to the increase. The question, therefore, arose, How could man recover his natural rights?

George supplied two answers to this question, one for new countries, the other for the Old World. In a newly-opened country it was best to regard the land as belonging to all, and to permit everyone to take possession of and cultivate as much as he required. If parts of the land thus taken possession of had special advantages, then their possessors should pay a rent to society. Similarly, if several people were to apply for the possession of such favoured plots of land, the bidder of the highest rent should get them. In old countries, however, the taxation of rent was the best remedy. All taxes on labour, industry, and trade were a burden and an impediment to their free development and should be abolished. Taxation of rent would thus form the single tax.

George further maintained that socialism was incompatible with personal freedom, the greatest good of man. In order to allow everyone to enjoy it to the fullest degree without prejudicing the freedom of his fellow-man it was but necessary to abolish the land monopoly; such a measure would gradually eradicate the social evils from which Labour was suffering.

Simultaneously with Henry George's agitation, Alfred Russel Wallace published his *Land Nationalisation* (1882), which went through two editions. It is an appeal to the working classes of Great Britain to make a serious effort for the nationalisation of the land, "the birthright of the British people," as the best means towards an amelioration of their miserable condition. Wallace directs his keen criticism at "the fundamental error shown to exist in our social system," to be found in "the leading idea which has governed all social and industrial legislation for the last fifty years . . . that whatever favours and assists the production of *wealth* and the accumulation of *capital* by individuals, necessarily advances the well-being of the whole community. That idea pervaded the whole legislation." But none of these legislative acts have resulted in a diffusion and equalisation of wealth, or in a diminution of the large class ever hovering on the verge of pauperism. . . . The increase of the number of very wealthy people or of any great capitalists (which is what legislation favours), so far from being beneficial, is, in

every respect, antagonistic to the well-being of the community at large." [1]

Wallace proposes, in the main, that the State shall assume the ownership of the land and that the holders shall be the cultivators. "Every one," he declares, "must hold land from the State, subject to whatever general laws and regulations are made for all land so held. The State must in no way deal with the individual land-holders, except through the medium of special courts, which will have to apply the laws in individual cases. Thus no State *management* will be required." [2]

However, it was not Wallace's appeal that attracted the attention of the incipient socialists, but Henry George's books and lectures. They stimulated many of the younger generation of intellectuals and working men, and caused them to turn their attention to economics. Four-fifths of the socialist leaders of Great Britain in the 'eighties had passed through the school of Henry George.[3]

In 1884 Henry George came once more to London. A public discussion of single-tax and socialism between him and H. M. Hyndman was held at St. James's Hall. By that time socialism had already two organisations in London, whose members and friends attended that meeting and evinced marked sympathy with the views so ably and eloquently advocated by the socialist opponent of Henry George.

[1] A. R. Wallace, *Land Nationalisation*, second edition, 1882, pp. 11–13.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 193.

[3] Archibald Henderson, *Life of G. B. Shaw*, p. 115; compare Sidney Webb, *Socialism in England*, p. 19 *sqq.*

XIII

SOCIALIST ORGANISATIONS

I.—THE DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION

In the history of the socialist revival since 1880 we have assigned one of the foremost places to Henry M. Hyndman. He has been the first to unfurl the banner that had fallen from the hands of the Chartists and the leaders of the International Working Men's Association. His leading ideas are the result of the teachings of Karl Marx, Bronterre O'Brien, and Benjamin Disraeli, all anti-liberal and anti-capitalist, and these ideas have been operating on an intensely English mind in revolt against commercialism. His organising activity began in 1881, when he had many meetings and conferences with various well-known men and women whom he thought to be in sympathy with his own aspirations, or in revolt against official Liberalism. He met Professor Edward Spencer Beesly, Helen Taylor (the stepdaughter of J. S. Mill), Joseph Cowen, Herbert Burrows, and several old Chartists and members of the I.W.M.A. Some of them entered into relations with the Radical working men's clubs and Irish associations in London, and finally decided to form a new Party. It was with this objective in view that Hyndman wrote his *England for All*—a manifesto embodying the principles of English democracy. It was first published in June, 1881, and republished three months later in a cheap popular edition. It distinctly points towards social democracy. It is written with great ability and verve, and it reveals the author as a serious politician, actively engaged in forming his own opinion on all the leading political questions of the country. The author was conscious that the task he undertook was difficult and that it demanded many sacrifices: but he thought that the circumstances were favour-

able, for the whole economic life was moving in the same direction.

On June 8, 1881, a conference of the founders of the new Party took place, on which the Democratic Federation was formed. Only a few of its members were clear in their minds as to their aims. Hyndman was aiming at the creation of a proletarian movement with the view of continuing the " great work of Spence and Owen, Stephens and Oastler, O'Connor and O'Brien, Ernest Jones and George J. Harney." [1] He had discussed with Marx the Chartist movement and inquired of him whether it would be advisable to revive it. Marx was in sympathy with the idea, but doubted its practicability.[2] Hyndman, however, dauntless and pertinacious as he is, went ahead and worked with might and main for the new organisation which he had called into being. He formulated the following programme : (1) Universal suffrage ; (2) Triennial Parliaments ; (3) Equal electoral divisions ; (4) Payment of members ; (5) Corruption and bribery of the electors to be punishable as criminal offences ; (6) Abolition of the House of Lords as a legislative body ; (7) Home Rule for Ireland ; (8) Self-government for the Colonies and Dependencies ; (9) Nationalisation of the land.

The latter demand was the only one of a socialist nature, and was at that time better known and more popular than any other. The membership of the Democratic Federation increased but slowly, and was never large. On the other hand, the most prominent socialists of the country gradually joined its ranks, among them being Ernest Belfort Bax, a philosophical writer of much originality; J. L. Joynes; William Morris, a poet and artist of great renown ; Eleanor Marx, the daughter of Karl Marx ; among its working men members were John E. Williams, James Macdonald, and Harry Quelch (1856–1913), editor of *Justice* from 1892 to his death. In 1883 they published a small pamphlet, *Socialism made plain*, which had a circulation of about 100,000

[1] *Justice*, April 19, 1884 ; March 21, July 25, September 27, November 21, 1885 ; Hyndman, *Record of an Adventurous Life*, Vol. I., p. 294.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 273.

copies. Its arguments may be thus summarised: social and political power was monopolised by those who lived on the labour of their fellow-men; up to 1832 the landlords had the upper hand; from 1832 to 1846 landlords and capitalists jointly ruled and governed, but differed on the subject of free-trade; ever since 1846 all difference between them had disappeared and they took it in turns to govern the country. What was the result of this dominion? Poverty for the working classes, luxury for the few, misgovernment in Ireland, ruin in India. The value of the annual production of the United Kingdom amounted to 1,300 millions sterling; of this sum the few received 1000 millions in rent, profit, and interest; the workers obtained 300 millions only. And yet all wealth was due to labour and ought to be the reward of labour. This just demand would never be realised so long as the means of production were monopolised, or so long as the system of wage-labour continued to exist. They demanded therefore, the socialisation of the sources of life. The production of wealth had already a social character; it was the product of collective work; all they were asking now was that exchange and distribution should also be put on a collective basis. The Democratic Federation was founded for the purpose of spreading these views among the working classes. It had been charged with attacking private property. No! It only attacked the private property of the few who were robbing the many of their well-earned property.

The masses were then urged to work for the following measures: (1) Erection of healthy dwellings by the central or local authorities and letting them at low rents to working men; (2) Free and universal education and at least one free meal for school children; (3) An Eight-Hours Day; (4) Progressive taxation on incomes of over £300; (5) Establishment of national banks and gradual abolition of private banking; (6) Nationalisation of railways and land; (7) Organisation of the unemployed under State control on co-operative principles; (8) Rapid redemption of the National Debt.

At the end of 1883 the members of the Federation resolved to publish a weekly paper. Edward Carpenter placed the

necessary funds at their disposal, and on January, 1884, the first number of *Justice* appeared, with the sub-title, *Organ of Social Democracy*. Since that date the paper has been issued with the utmost regularity, but it has never paid its way. The self-sacrifice of a few socialist writers has kept it going. The services it has rendered to the propaganda of Marxist views in Great Britain have been considerable.

From the outset the chief agitator has been Hyndman, who is also a remarkable speaker and writer of a vigorous and trenchant English. It is owing mainly to his tireless energy and unflinching courage that the Federation continued to exist, under various names, up to the Great War. But he also imparted to it a dogmatic, fierce, and anti-liberal spirit. His most famous co-worker in the first years was William Morris, who had been introduced into the Federation by Ernest Belfort Bax. His devotion to the movement knew no bounds. He defrayed the first year's deficit of the *Justice*; he delivered lectures on socialism at street-corners, in the parks and at working men's clubs, and he played the part of a newspaper-boy and pushed the sale of the organ of the Federation. He called upon the masses to join the new movement :—

> "Come, shoulder to shoulder, ere the earth grows older!
> The Cause spreads over land and sea;
> Now the world shaketh and fear awaketh,
> And joy at last for thee and me."

The path, along which William Morris entered the sphere of revolutionary socialism, took its point of departure in a vague sentiment of repulsion to the triumphs of commercial civilisation,—a sentiment, born of his study of human history, of his deep love of life, of his passion for the practice of art. Looking backwards at the efforts, struggles, and achievements of mankind, and comparing them with the dull squalor of the mechanical civilisation around him, he asked himself, "Was it all to end in a counting-house on the top of a cinder heap, with Podsnap's drawing-room in the office, and a Whig committee dealing out champagne to the rich and margarine to the poor?" Had the Promethean struggles of mankind produced nothing but this

sordid, aimless, and ugly confusion? In this mood, Ruskin was his master towards a new social ideal, while the reading of Carlyle's *Past and Present* merely intensified his discontent with the present conditions. Mill's posthumous papers on socialism, although containing anti-socialist arguments,[1] convinced him that socialism was necessary and that it was possible to bring it about in our own days. He became a socialist, joined the Federation, and tried to learn something of the economic side of the movement. He tackled Marx's *Capital*, the historical part of which he thoroughly enjoyed, but suffered agonies of confusion of brain over reading its pure economics. Prior to his conversion to socialism he was for a short space of time a Radical. His views on the failure of Radicalism are embodied in two letters which he addressed, in 1883, to a Radical friend, and which afford an insight into the mental development of Morris during that crisis. Morris wrote:—

"For my part I used to think that one might further real socialistic progress by doing what one could on the lines of ordinary middle-class Radicalism: I have been driven of late to the conclusion that I was mistaken; that Radicalism is on the wrong line, so to say, and will never develop into anything more than Radicalism; in fact that it is made for and by the middle classes and will always be under the control of rich capitalists; they will have no objection to its political development, if they think they can stop it there; but as to real social changes, they will not allow them if they can help it; you may see almost any day such phrases as 'this is the proper way to stop the spread of socialism' in the Liberal papers, the writer of the phrase never taking the trouble to find out what socialism meant. . . . Meantime I can see no use in people having political freedom unless they use it as an instrument for leading reasonable and manlike lives. . . . . I cannot help thinking that the workmen will be soon finding out that for themselves; it is certain that Henry George's book has been received in this country and in America as a new Gospel. I believe that Socialism is advancing, and will advance more and more as education spreads, and, so believing,

[1] Published by Helen Taylor in the *Fortnightly Review*, 1879.

I find my duty clear to do my best to further its advance. . . . The contrasts of rich and poor are unendurable and ought not to be endured by either rich or poor. Now it seems to me that, feeling this, I am bound to act for the destruction of the system which seems to me mere oppression and obstruction; such a system can only be destroyed, it seems to me, by the united discontent of numbers; isolated acts of a few persons of the middle and upper classes seem to me quite powerless against it; in other words the antagonism of classes, which the system has bred, is the natural and necessary instrument of its destruction. The system of chattel slavery had to give place to the feudal system of seigneur and serf; and this has been swept away in favour of our present contract system between rich and poor, and this in turn will give place to socialism." [1]

Morris was extremely serious in his socialist views and prepared, if necessary, to offer his life to the cause he embraced :—

" Hear a word, a word in season, for the day is drawing nigh
When the Cause shall call upon us, some to live and some to die!
He that dies shall not die lonely; many a one hath gone before;
He that lives shall bear no burden heavier than the life they bore.
Nothing ancient is their story, e'en but yesterday they bled,
Youngest they of earth's beloved, last of all the valiant fled. . . . "[2]

In those days British socialists still believed that socialism would have to be won by means of physical force. Morris was ready to undergo even this ordeal. The speeches of some of the leaders of the Federation bore a violent character. They were reminiscent of Chartist times, and boldly proclaimed the old Chartist battle-cry, Peacefully if we may—forcefully if we must. At that time the following historical parallel was popular with some members of the socialist movement: " Gunpowder helped to sweep away feudalism when new forms arose from the decay of the old; now far stronger explosives are arrayed against

[1] J. W. Mackail, *Life of William Morris*, ed. 1912, Vol. II., p. 109 *sqq*.

[2] This moving poem was written on the occasion of a public debate between Hyndman and Bradlaugh on April 17, 1884. It is published in *Justice*, April 19, 1884.

capitalism, whilst the ideas of the time are rife with revolution as they were when feudalism fell. To obviate anarchy we must organise and educate the masses." [1]

The concluding sentence lends to this striking parallel a peaceful and statesmanlike aspect, but the catchword of gunpowder against feudalism and dynamite against capitalism was used by unscrupulous adversaries of socialism.

From the commencement of 1884 Eleanor Marx, Dr. Edward Aveling, Henry H. Champion, Walter Crane, and Hunter Watts took an active part in the movement in addition to Hyndman, Bax, Morris, Andreas Scheu, Burrows, and Joynes. George B. Shaw was very near joining the Federation, but he finally decided in favour of the Fabian Society.

On August 4, 1884, the Federation held its fourth annual conference, at which, on the motion of Burrows and Williams, it adopted the name Social Democratic Federation (S.D.F.), and it retained this name down to 1907.

Until the end of March, 1884, the members of the Federation worked together in harmony and comradeship. Gradually, discord and dissension began to make themselves painfully noticeable. As usual the discord was ascribed to personal factors, particularly to the domineering temper of Hyndman. In reality the cause was not so simple. Unity prevailed during the initial stages of the Federation, owing first to the hope of a speedy success among the working men, secondly to the general want of clearness as to the nature of the means by which socialism could be achieved. Enthusiasm, hope, and indefiniteness formed a mist which concealed the sharp and jagged outlines of the field of operations. In the spring of 1884 the failure of the agitation was apparent: the Radical working men's clubs refused to join the Federation; at the same time the members had to some extent attained to clearer views as to matters of policy. Schism and discord were the inevitable result. It was evident that the Federation consisted of heterogeneous elements —parliamentary social reformers, revolutionary social democrats, anti-parliamentary socialists, and pronounced anarchists.

[1] *Justice*, April 19, 1884.

The result was a foregone conclusion. By the end of December, 1884, the disruption was complete. Morris, Crane, Bax, Eleanor Marx, Scheu, and others left the Federation and formed the Socialist League, while Hyndman, Champion, Joynes, John Burns, Hunter Watts, H. W. Lee, Quelch, Williams, Burrows, and others remained in the Federation.

2.—THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE

Before continuing the history of the Social Democratic Federation it is advisable to give an account of the Socialist League, for it was but an episode in the revival of socialism during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The Federation emerged from the split as a reduced body, crippled both in financial and intellectual resources, but it had gained homogeneity. Its leaders were Hyndman and Champion, who stood head and shoulders above all other members in authority, knowledge, and ability. It was easy for them to impress their views upon the whole organisation. The Socialist League found itself in a quite different position. It lacked unity of views and aspirations; some of its members had turned their backs upon the Federation, because they mistrusted Hyndman; others were convinced that it was premature for a socialist organisation to perform the duties of a political party, and that the most urgent task consisted in the dissemination of socialist ideas with the object of gradually educating the working men to independent political action; others again had a low opinion of parliamentary action or were avowed anarchists.

At that time William Morris belonged to the anti-parliamentarians. His arguments were somewhat as follows: the socialists hoped to see society transformed into something quite different from what it was. They were looking for a revolution, for a radical change of the social institutions. On the other hand, the object of parliamentary institutions was the preservation of society in its present form, and to mend the defects of the political machinery in order to keep it going. Liberal legislation—and there was no other, for the Tories also were forced to

legislate in a Liberal sense—meant yielding what was absolutely necessary to popular demands in the assured hope of whittling them down to their lowest minimum, so that the fleecing of the people might never come to an end.[1]

Strictly considered, this argument is directed not only against parliamentary action, but against every kind of reform short of revolution. It may be applied to factory legislation, to social insurance, to trade unionism, and generally to all measures that are aiming at amelioration. The error into which Morris fell lay in regarding society as a mechanical contrivance and reform as a sort of patching up of some defective parts of the machine. This mode of viewing society allows of no other remedy than the complete removal of the old machine and its replacement by another of a quite different pattern. In reality society is not a mechanical contrivance, but a living organism in constant change and development, an organisation capable of being developed into a higher form by legislative and other measures granted to a new class rising in importance and power in society. At first the influence of such reforms on the social structure may be imperceptible, but with the increase of the quantity of reforms the alteration in the quality of society grows apace, until it amounts to a revolutionary change visible to all. Great social upheavals which are designated revolutions are the effect of the inrush of economic and ethical transformations into the region of politics, or of the peremptory demand of a large portion of the nation to give legal effect to them and redistribute political power accordingly. The real revolution had been going more or less silently for a long time anterior to the upheaval, but, as it had been split up in particular changes and reforms effected during long intervals, there was no considerable resistance to its growth. The revolution, in its dramatic or sensational form, is but an attempt to add up the particular changes and reforms and bring out the sum total. The revolutionary character of a reform does not depend on its volume and sweep, but on its direction and nature. In our time, for instance, any reform is revolutionary which tends to strengthen the

[1] *Commonweal*, 1885, p. 61.

working class and to give them control of the means of production, distribution, and exchange.

Socialists and anarchists who have not yet overcome the mechanical conception of society would no doubt reject that definition of revolutionary reform and would maintain that everything which tended to intensify the dissatisfaction of the working classes and influence them against the existing order was revolutionary, while social reform but tended to render them less dissatisfied and less rebellious and was therefore anti-revolutionary in its effect. According to this view the condition of the working classes must grow worse before it would grow better, while according to the biological view the condition of the working classes must gradually improve in order to fit them for the higher duties of social citizenship.

However, Morris hardly speculated upon these questions. He was undoubtedly of a heroic mould of character, and, like Sir Thomas More, would cheerfully have mounted the scaffold and laid down his head on the block. But, unlike Sir Thomas More, he was infinitely more of an artist and humanitarian than of a sociologist and statesman. After he had left the Federation he fell into the hands of anarchists.

It would be hard to find a socialist organisation which exhibited so much talent and self-sacrifice and at the same time so little organising and executive capacity, as the Socialist League. Morris gave it his best, poems of great excellence, newspaper articles, utopian romances of imperishable beauty of language and imagination, like the *Dream of John Ball* (1888) and *News from Nowhere* (1890), and large money contributions. Belfort Bax was the theorist of the League. With them worked Eleanor Marx-Aveling, who in energy and devotion equalled her father; Dr. Edward Aveling, who translated a part of *Capital* into English; Andreas Scheu, an Austrian socialist, of whom Morris had a high opinion, was one of the agitators; Frederick Engels was the adviser of the parliamentary socialists of the League. In February, 1885, they founded the *Commonweal*, which was first published monthly, and then weekly. The ablest members of the League wrote for it. Morris was the editor, and

no paper has ever been directed by a man of greater genius. From 1886 to 1888 Belfort Bax and Morris wrote for it a series of essays under the heading *Socialism: its growth and outcome*, which appeared later in book form; they are a paraphrase of the *Communist Manifesto*, but based on English economic and political history. From a financial point the paper was never a success; it suffered from a chronic deficit. The League itself made no progress. Its largest membership only amounted to a few hundred, and even this number was mainly the result of the unemployed agitation and other political demonstrations which were arranged in 1886 and 1887 by the Social Democratic Federation and by the London Radical clubs in favour of the Irish or of free speech, leading to disturbances of the public peace, which will be treated in a later chapter. About the middle of 1887 the anarchists began to gain the upper hand in the League and rendered it impossible for Morris to work with any chance of success for a reunion with the Social Democratic Federation. From that time the League commenced to show signs of disintegration. The parliamentary socialists withdrew in 1888 and either returned to the Federation, or took up the work of organising the unskilled working men and of promoting "New Unionism." In 1889 the victory of the anarchists in the League was complete. They deprived Morris of the editorship of the *Commonweal* and handed it over to Frank Kitz, an anarchist workman, while Morris was patiently defraying the deficits of the paper, which amounted to £4 weekly. In the meantime he had learned much wisdom. He confessed that anarchism was an impossibility and that the anarchists, against their will, taught him that lesson, just as John Stuart Mill, also against his will, had taught him that socialism was necessary.[1] In the autumn of 1890 Morris decided to withdraw from the League, and in November he sent a valedictory letter to the *Commonweal*, in which he summed up his socialist views and his attitude towards the anarchists. He drew attention to the fact that notwithstanding the short space of time of seven years,

[1] J. W. Mackail, *op. cit.*, p. 232; compare *How I became a Socialist*. p. 17 *sqq.*, published by *Justice*.

the small number of socialist agitators and their slight mental equipment, the progress of socialist ideas was considerable. He had hoped the working men themselves would produce leaders from their midst. This hope had not been realised. And in the League itself much time and energy had been wasted by petty squabbles, lack of deliberation and of unselfishness, though there had been evidence of courage and readiness for making sacrifices. In spite of all this, socialism had increased in influence, simply because the apparently impregnable edifice of modern society was now on the verge of its downfall. Owing to the knowledge that the victory of socialism was inevitable, there was at present a good deal of discussion as to the proper policy to be adopted. The policy of physical force was senseless and only recoiled on the heads of its advocates. The policy of social reform would lead to State socialism and was equally undesirable. But there could be no gainsaying the fact that the spirit of the time was favourable to the policy of reform. At a period when reforms were being demanded on all sides it was the duty of all true socialists to confine themselves to preaching socialism. Only when a greater number of people professed socialism would it be time to discuss policies and lines of action.[1]

In the last years of his life Morris took no active part either in the S.D.F. or in the anarchist movement. A small group of men and women formed at Kelmscott House the Hammersmith Socialist Society, where Morris used to lecture or to attend the lectures of his friends. The Society published a few pamphlets and signed also the *Joint Socialist Manifesto*, drafted by the representatives of the S.D.F. and the Fabian Society on May 1, 1893.

A deep insight into the character of Morris is given by G. D. H. Cole: "Morris passed from art to socialism, because he saw that under capitalism there could be no art and no happiness

[1] In the summer of 1895 Morris invited me to Kelmscott House. In a conversation on Socialism I defended parliamentary action, while Morris thought such action to be of little use in Great Britain. Grant Allen, then famous for his book *The Woman Who Did*, was present and appeared to support the views of Morris.

for the great majority. . . . He saw clearly that, so long as men are in thrall to the industrial system, there could be no good art and no good life for the mass of the people. Perhaps he did not see so clearly the way out—that was less his business. What he did was to put clearly before the world the baseness and iniquity of industrialism, and its polluting effect on civilisation despite the increase of material wealth. . . . He wanted passionately that the things men had to make should be worth making—a joy to the maker and to the user." Those who desire to understand Morris should start with reading his *Hopes and Fears for Art*, "in which he set out clearly his conception of the relation of art to the social system." Then let them read the *Dream of John Ball*, a message of a free England, in which men count as comrades and not as "hands" in a profit-making system. Morris, more than any other prophet of revolution, "is of the same blood as national guildsmen, freedom for self-expression, freedom at work as well as at leisure, freedom to serve as well as to enjoy—that is the guiding principle of his life. Or as Morris sang:

> Ours is the host that bears the word
> *No master high or low*—
> A lightning flame, a shearing sword,
> A storm to overthrow.[1]"

Morris's influence, as we see, is still active; it is being felt among the Guild Socialists, the Church Socialist League, and literary men who are inclined towards socialism, like Clutton Brock and John Drinkwater.

3.—THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION

The S.D.F. began its career in 1885 as a small group, impaired by the defection of the men and women of the Socialist League, and immediately threw itself into the fray of parliamentary action in spite of its numerical and financial weakness. The political situation of the country appeared most favourable to this attitude; the dissolution of parliament and a general

[1] G. D. H. Cole, *Self-Government in Industry*, third edition, pp. 120–21, 302 (Bell & Sons, London, 1917).

election were imminent. In the previous year the agricultural labourers had obtained the franchise; the Gladstone Cabinet which had directed the affairs of the country since 1880 had lost much of its prestige on account of the Irish unrest and the Egyptian war; the Radical wing of the Liberal party was in open rebellion. The end of the old Liberal period, which had become apparent since 1880, was now an established fact. Neither the Conservatives nor the Liberals, for the most part, had any clear idea as to their future policy. Disraeli was dead, and his place as leader of the Conservative party was taken by Lord Salisbury, who was essentially a Whig. The Liberalism of old had been so completely victorious that there was nothing more left for it to do, and it had therefore to disappear from the political arena. What, however, was the Liberal party to do? The only politician who had an answer ready was Joseph Chamberlain, the member for Birmingham and the idol of his fellow-citizens, just as Thomas Attwood was in his time. In August, 1885, Parliament was dissolved. Chamberlain started his agitation and delivered aggressive speeches on social reform. Liberalism had to be set on its legs again by means of a popular programme. Inequality in the distribution of national wealth was the chief evil that had to be remedied. Free and universal education: a graduated income-tax; land reform; the transformation of the agricultural labourers into owners of small holdings; an extension of municipal self-government in order to facilitate the enactment of these reforms by the municipalities; Ireland also would have to obtain a scheme of local autonomy. Lord Salisbury expressed alarm at this programme and dubbed its author "Jack Cade." Indeed, Chamberlain's memorable "Ransom" speeches were reminiscent of natural law doctrine. The whole country was in a state of excitement.

To high-spirited politicians like Hyndman and Champion, the state of affairs seemed to be particularly propitious for the S.D.F. to come forward as a political factor. Both of them attempted, first of all, to negotiate with Mr. Chamberlain, but he bluntly refused to consider their suggestions. Thereupon Champion applied to his friend, Mr. Hudson, the soap manu-

facturer, who provided him with the funds for the candidature of John Burns. The Conservative Party, apprehensive of the victory of the Jack Cades, attempted to split the Liberal vote, and supplied the funds for two other social democratic candidates. The S.D.F. was now able to enter upon its electoral campaign. John Burns contested Nottingham, John E. Williams Hampstead, and John Fielding Kennington. The elections took place in November, 1885. Burns obtained 598 votes, Williams 27 votes, Fielding 32 votes. Socialism was evidently still too weak for the *rôle* of a political party. The result of the elections proved for the S.D.F. all but fatal. It lost many of its members; the subscriptions decreased to an alarming extent; the press began to ignore its very existence. But this eclipse of the S.D.F. was soon overcome. In 1886 the demonstrations of the unemployed and the Radical agitation in favour of the Irish gave the leaders of the S.D.F. an opportunity for attracting notice and regaining prestige, and they were not long in seizing it.

The economic depression which began in 1875 reached its lowest depths in 1886. The number of the unemployed had greatly increased; discontent spread in an ever-widening circle; the dissatisfaction with free-trade found expression in the movement for fair-trade. In addition, the disruption of the Liberal Party, consequent upon Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill, deepened the general unrest which had been gathering since 1880. The materials for agitation were all ready to hand, and it was therefore an easy matter to arrange huge demonstrations in London. In the provinces also, in Manchester, Birmingham, Leicester and elsewhere, unemployed processions were organised. The years 1886 and 1887 were in general characterised by international unrest. Disturbances, strikes, and street fighting took place in Holland and Belgium; the violent agitations in some parts of the United States, led by anarchist communists, reached their climax in the tragic dynamite outrage in Chicago. Altogether, it was a most favourable time for the deployment of popular forces and for arraying them against the existing order.

The leaders of the S.D.F. marshalled the London unemployed in processions, arranged deputations to various poor law guar-

dians, and held open air meetings. In one of these meetings Champion declared that he wished the capitalist class had only one neck, so that the misery of the people could be ended by a single stroke. Hyndman was of opinion that the prayers of the unemployed would only gain the ear of the public if a rich man were to be sacrificed on the grave of every poor man. The S.D.F., however, had not the field to itself. It found a competitor in the movement for fair trade or protective tariffs, into which also some labour leaders had drifted, and which decided to arrange counter-demonstrations with the view of attracting the masses and teaching them that the real cause of their misery was free trade and not capitalism, and that the true remedy was protection and not socialism. Towards the end of January, 1886, the leading men of the S.D.F. learned that the protectionists were thinking of holding a demonstration in Trafalgar Square. The S.D.F. at once decided to arrange a counter-demonstration on the same day and at the same place. On February 8, both the protectionists and the social democrats converged on Trafalgar Square. Under these circumstances a disturbance of the peace could hardly be avoided. The police, therefore, requested the leaders of the S.D.F., in the interest of public order, to transfer their demonstration to Hyde Park. John Burns then seized the red flag, and, with his stentorian voice, called upon the crowd to follow him. Hyndman, Champion, and Williams marched at the head and the crowd followed them. When the demonstration reached the streets in the neighbourhood of Pall Mall, some of the rich young men of the fashionable clubs appeared at the windows and doors, and provoked the crowd by derisive gestures and taunts. A shower of stones against the windows was the prompt reply of the demonstrators. The excitement rapidly increased in intensity, and soon the unemployed attacked the large shops and looted them until the police rushed up and scattered the mob. Hyndman, Burns, Champion, and Williams were arrested and soon released on bail. This, however, was not the only result of the demonstration: in the course of a few days the Lord Mayor of the City of London raised about £75,000 for the unemployed. The newspapers,

which depend for their existence on creating sensations and scares, did their very best to magnify the powers of the S.D.F. a thousandfold and to exaggerate its harmfulness to an absurd degree. On April 5, 1886, the four accused socialist leaders were brought before a jury. Burns delivered a great revolutionary speech, while Hyndman was the real counsel for the defence. On April 10 all the defendants were acquitted. In the latter half of 1887 trade improved, and the opportunity for work was more plentiful, so that the unemployed agitation lost its hold upon the masses. The police began to look upon such demonstrations as a nuisance to be checked and took stringent measures against them. On October 18, 1887, the police broke up one of these meetings in Trafalgar Square, and arrested twenty persons. A similar occurrence took place in Hyde Park. The change of Government must also have contributed to the change in the police attitude towards the unemployed demonstrations. The Liberals had been defeated and the Conservatives came in, whose Home Secretary prohibited all meetings in Trafalgar Square. This measure, which was regarded as an attack on free speech, aroused great dissatisfaction among the Radicals in London, who were willing to make common cause with the Socialists in defence of liberty. In addition, the Liberals were dissatisfied with the treatment which Mr. William O'Brien, the Irish member of Parliament, who was then undergoing a term of imprisonment, received at the hands of the prison authorities. The Radicals of London therefore decided to demonstrate in favour of O'Brien on Sunday, November 13, 1887, in Trafalgar Square. At first they tried to induce the Home Secretary to give them the use of the Square. With this object in view they sent to him a deputation headed by Cunninghame Graham, the socialist and Scottish member of Parliament. The Home Secretary received the deputation, but refused their request, whereupon the Radicals and socialists resolved to defy the Government. Sir Charles Warren, at that time Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, closed the square both with police and military troops. All the bridges leading from the south of London to the Square were guarded by soldiers, and the police formed an iron ring

round the Square. Contingents of demonstrators from the South of London attempted to rush the sentries at Westminster Bridge, but were repulsed; several of them were wounded, and had to be transported to Charing Cross Hospital. The contingent from the North of London approached under the leadership of Cunninghame Graham and John Burns. Both of them made a determined attempt to force a way through the police cordon for their men, but were badly handled by the police, especially Graham, who bled profusely. Both Burns and Graham were then taken into custody. These events were subsequently known as "Bloody Sunday." On February 28, 1888, another demonstration took place, at which a workman, Sinnell by name, was mortally wounded by the police. The socialists of London arranged an imposing funeral at which William Morris and Harry Quelch were the chief speakers. This event coincided with the conclusion of the period of unemployed demonstrations. Graham and Burns were arraigned before a jury and sentenced each to six weeks' imprisonment. Their counsel for the defence was Mr. H. H. Asquith, at that time a barrister, but at the present day (1914) Prime Minister, with John Burns as his colleague in the Cabinet (till August, 1914)!

In casting our glance back upon this period, apparently a time of great ferment and excitement, we must refer to the apocalyptic hopes to which it gave rise. Although it was the product of unorganised and practically aimless movements and agitations, it was regarded by some of the socialist leaders as the eve of the social revolution. Morris and Champion indeed uttered warnings against rash measures, but they were both of opinion that these events had a revolutionary significance. Morris drew from them the lesson that the task of the socialists consisted in the "education of the people for the revolution," whilst Champion called attention to the inefficiency of the traditional fighting by means of barricades. Champion was a soldier and knew a good deal of military service, which affords an excellent training for thinking in revolutionary realities. He wrote:

"The recent labour troubles in the United States, Belgium, and Holland, show the bitterness of the spirit of revolt now aflame

in the hearts of the working classes and the readiness with which their enemies call in the assistance of brute force. The first object of a general is to get the initiative, to keep in his own hands the choice of place and time of fighting. We have seen that rioters and even revolutionists have nearly always neglected this elementary precaution. Invariably the Government selects the occasion and the position. There is no excuse for such fatal blunderings. It seems to arise in this way. In peaceful times the Socialists of all shades are usually hard at work denouncing social injustice. Some incidents occur that arouse popular indignation, and the revolutionists are suddenly called upon to make good their words. Too often they have not the courage to say: 'This is not the time nor are you prepared. Go home and organise victory.' Usually they have been goaded by taunts into premature action, with the result; ruthless white terror, imprisonment, disorganisation. Nor do some of our comrades seem to have realised the full meaning of modern improvements in weapons of war. In previous times barricades may have been successful. In the face of our modern arms of precision and quick-firing guns, barricades are of no use. To be successful in street-fighting we must have either better weapons or the positive assurance that the soldiers will refuse to obey their officers. If we should do it we are just like savages, who, with their arrows and bows, array themselves against Gatling and Nordenfeldt guns. The *rôle* of street-fighting is over." [1]

It must not be supposed, however, that Champion, in giving utterance to these wise reflections, renounced the policy of physical force. On the contrary, he was careful to point out at the same time that street-fighting would have to give place to dynamite—dynamite in the hands of small groups of determined men, acting in secret. Nevertheless, Champion must not be counted among the decided adherents of physical force. He did not believe in violence as a principle. He was merely sick and tired of futile demonstrations and doctrinaire discussions. Successful parliamentary action would have completely satisfied him. In 1887 he left the S.D.F., and joined the staff of the

[1] *Justice*, August 14, 1886.

Nineteenth Century, working at the same time for the creation of an independent Labour party. The rise of the New Unionism, which may be regarded as one of the results of the ferment of 1886 and 1887, favoured such an idea. In 1889 Champion placed at the disposal of the dockers' strike his military knowledge of deploying and exercising large bodies of men and posting of sentries. He edited the *Labour Elector*, to which he gave a social conservative tendency. In this he was influenced by Maltman Barry, a Conservative disciple of Karl Marx and a writer of ability and great *savoir faire*, who was never appreciated at his true value by his party friends.[1] Champion left England definitely in 1894 and settled in Australia, where he has been active in the interest of social democracy.

Still, the year 1887 was remarkable enough. Its stormy events suggested to the *Westminster Review* the following thoughts: "The community should address itself to the great social questions which every day are knocking more loudly at our doors. The 'convincing statistics' of official optimists like Mr. Giffen betray a significant miscalculation of the factors and forces in modern society. It may be true, as he is always telling us, that there is not more poverty or misery in England than there used to be. But he omits to state that there is infinitely less disposition on the part of the poor to put up with their poverty. . . . This movement is common to the whole world, and in this country has been largely forwarded by the agitation of the S.D.F., which the general public has alternately ignored and gone into panics over. The effects of the agitation, however, are too patent by this time for it to be sneered at or suppressed." The paper relates further how Champion was invited by the Church Congress to lecture before them on social-

[1] In 1902, on the occasion of the London Trade Union Congress, Mr. (later Sir) Randall Cremer and M. Jean Longuet introduced me to Maltman Barry. On my question as to his opinion about Marx, he gave me the following reply: "As a Conservative, I dislike naturally three things: Atheism, the Jewry, and Germany. Marx united in himself all the three. Yet, when I stood before him, listening to his words, I forgot my idiosyncrasies and I had but one feeling—veneration."

ism, how the Northumberland miners, on the instigation of the socialists, refused the Parliamentary salaries to their leaders, Messrs. Burt and Fenwick, and carried a resolution in favour of an eight hours' day. "This is the first victory of the new socialist section, but will not be the last." [1] The author of that paper proved a true prophet. The year 1887 saw also in the northern parts of Great Britain the rise of independent Labour politics, but there it was Keir Hardie and not Hyndman who was throwing the ferment into the trade union movement.

Towards the end of 1887 the S.D.F. possessed thirty branches, mainly in London and Lancashire. *Justice* was increased in size. The S.D.F. began to gain in strength owing to the rise of New Unionism in 1888, and the successful dockers' strike in 1889. The chief leaders in that memorable movement, viz., Ben Tillett, Tom Mann, John Burns, William Thorne, Herbert Burrows, Annie Besant, and Eleanor Marx, either were members of the S.D.F. or had close relations with it. Ever since that event the general interest in socialism has been keener. The establishment of the London County Council, the rise of municipal socialism, the revival of the International Working Men's Association in 1889 at the congresses in Paris and Brussels, the celebration of May Day, and the general election of 1902, have all greatly contributed to the dissemination of socialist ideas. The S.D.F., however, had only a membership of about 5,000 in 1894 and about 9,000 in 1900, rising in the first decade of the present century to about 12,000. Its influence has always been an indirect one. It has stimulated action both by its criticism and by its positive proposals. In parliamentary elections it has always been unsuccessful. In 1892 it put forward two candidates, in Salford and in Bethnal Green, and they received only 659 votes in all. In 1895 its four candidates polled a total of 3,730 votes. In the general election of January, 1906, it had eight candidates, but not a single one was successful. Their total number of votes amounted to 22,000, including 4,932 cast for Hyndman in Burnley, but this number fell to 3,810 in the December elections of 1910.

[1] *Westminster Review*, December 1887, pp. 1063-64.

4.—PROGRAMME AND ELECTORAL POLICY OF THE S.D.F.

The federation has had two programmes since its foundation. The first, which was adopted in October, 1884, ran as follows :—

Labour is the source of all wealth, therefore all wealth belongs to labour. The object of the S.D.F. is the establishment of a free society, based on the principles of political equality, with equal social rights for all and complete emancipation of Labour. Our demands are : all officers or administrators to be elected by universal suffrage ; legislation by the people ; abolition of the standing army ; establishment of a militia ; the people to decide upon peace and war ; free, secular, and compulsory education ; free justice ; Home Rule for Ireland and the Colonies ; the production of wealth to be regulated by society in the common interest of all ; the means of production, distribution, and exchange to be declared as collective property.

This is followed by the programme adopted by the Democratic Federation.

The programme has been extensively amended since 1893 and took shape as follows :—

Object.—Collective ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange managed by a democratic State in the interest of the whole commonwealth ; complete emancipation of labour from the domination of capital and landlords ; establishment of social and economic equality between the sexes.

This is followed by the demands which are identical with those of the former programme. Finally the following measures are demanded as palliatives or temporary reforms "in order to alleviate the evils of existing society" ; public authorities and corporations to build healthy houses for the people, the rents solely to cover the cost of building and maintenance ; free, secular, and technical education, to be compulsory for all classes ; likewise free feeding and clothing of children in all national schools. Child-labour is forbidden until the age of sixteen years ; employers are to be severely punished for any violation of these measures. The normal working-day consists of eight hours or less, but not more than forty-eight hours in the week ; any

breach of this law is to be punished. Cumulative taxation all incomes over £300 a year. Nationalisation of railways; municipalisation of gas, electricity, and water; organisation of road-traffic in towns and of similar public monopolies in the interest of the whole commonwealth. Extension of the Post Office Savings Banks, so as to absorb all private institutions drawing profits from banking transactions. Repudiation of the national debt, collective ownership of land, organisation of agriculture in the interest of working men by the State and the municipality on the basis of co-operative principles. Disestablishment of the Church. Pensions for aged and invalid workers. Every person of the age of fifty to be released from the obligation to work, and granted the right to be supported by the State. Erection of municipal hospitals. Municipal control of the supply of coal and foodstuffs. Abolition of the present system of the maintenance of the poor, and the unemployed to be provided with useful work. State control of the lifeboat service. Payment of members of Parliament and municipal officials; election expenses to be defrayed by the State. Universal suffrage, annual parliaments, proportional representation, abolition of plural voting, abolition of monarchy and the House of Lords, self-government for all parts of the Empire.

It is manifest that the programme grew up by successive addition of all kinds of reform measures, as opportunity demanded. The members of the S.D.F. have, as a rule, attached little importance to the palliative measures. They regarded them as being only capable of alleviating the social evils, but not of radically curing them. At the best they could but serve as a stimulant to the ailing, and give them a chance of pulling through the crisis. There was, however, a section of the S.D.F. who regarded palliatives as positively injurious, since they were calculated to render the existing order more bearable, to lull the people and keep them quiet. The argument used by this section was that the task of the socialist was to allow the existing state of things to grow as bad as possible in order to aggravate class warfare, and cause it to rise to the intensity and volume of a social revolution. But even those members of the S.D.F.

who expressed approval of palliative measures failed to see that they were well worth fighting for, that the struggle waged on their account must lead to two results—first to a moral and intellectual improvement of those who are engaged in the battle for reform, secondly to a change in the social structure.

The attitude of the S.D.F. towards social reform was not much in advance of that of Chartism. It drew up an extensive programme of reforms in order to depreciate it. Its annual conferences recommended palliative measures and they were haunted by the fear that they might postpone the revolution. This ambiguity led to misunderstandings and contradictions, which in 1903 and 1905 caused members in Scotland and London to secede from the S.D.F. and call rival organisations into being. They faced the consequences and condemned all propaganda for reform, devoting their energies to the spread of uncompromising, revolutionary socialism. The Scottish secessionists organised themselves into the Socialist Labour Party (1903) after the model of the American Socialist Labour Party, led by Daniel De Leon (*d.* 1914), a professor of international law at the Columbia University, New York, and an extreme Marxist, who in the last years of his life embraced syndicalist views, without however rejecting Parliamentary action. The London secessionists formed the Socialist Party of Great Britain (1905), and with much perseverance and self-sacrifice have been disseminating Marx's views on economics and political class warfare.

The lack of clearness concerning the relation between reform and revolution, the faith in the efficacy of carrying theoretic resolutions and programmes, and the misinterpretation of Labour politics, have prevented the S.D.F. from developing into a great Socialist Labour party, or bridging the gulf between pure sublimated theory and the complexities and crudities of social life.

The S.D.F., for the same reason, was never able to reach a complete unanimity with regard to electoral policy. Its principles, which were the outcome of the theory of class-war, consisted in adopting the same attitude to the Liberal as to the Conservative party, with a spirit of enmity to both of them. No alliance, no

compromise with outside bodies. Independent action as social democrats in opposition to all non-socialist candidates, whether the latter belonged to the capitalist class or to the working class. It was not merely the capitalist, it was the non-socialist who had to be opposed. In practice, however, it was not possible to give effect to these principles. At elections the members of the S.D.F. displayed the tendency to vote for the Radicals in constituencies where no social democrat candidates had been put forward. The violation of this principle caused much discontent. This was increased by the old Chartist tradition that the Whigs (the Liberals) were the real enemies who had to be swept out of the way. These fluctuations in opinion were expressed in the eighteenth and nineteenth annual conferences (1898 and 1899). At the former conference the following resolution was proposed by the committee :—

" This Conference is of opinion that the votes of members should be consistently used for opposing Liberal candidates. Wherever no social democrat candidates are standing, our members should at all times vote for the Tories, excepting in the case of candidates who belong to the extreme Radical section of the Liberal party, and are ready to work for the realisation of our immediate demands."

After Hyndman and other delegates had spoken in favour of the resolution, Dan Irving, the delegate from Burnley, moved the following amendment :—

" In view of the fact that capitalists and landlords show the tendency at elections to combine in injuring the interests of the people, the Conference urges upon the Executive Committee to induce the members to cast their votes against both Liberals and Conservatives and to keep solely in view the interests of socialism, except in cases where the candidates are extreme Radicals."

The difference between the two resolutions is sufficiently clear. The former resolution was particularly directed against Liberalism, whose destruction is considered as the most important task of the socialists as voters. This policy of the S.D.F. is an exact, though unconscious, repetition of Feargus O'Connor's attitude

in 1840–41. The other resolution is strictly social revolutionary and coincides with Bronterre O'Brien's views at that period.

The Executive withdrew its resolution in favour of Irving's, which was passed unanimously. Nevertheless, a year later the Executive reaffirmed its belief in the resolution it had withdrawn and placed it before the annual conference. It provoked a keen discussion. Irving and Burrows spoke against it. The latter declared that the Federation had neither the power to injure the Liberals nor the mandate to force social democrats to vote for Tories. Finally, the resolution was adopted by 51 votes to 31, but it possessed merely an academic value.

5.—THE RELATION BETWEEN THE S.D.F. AND TRADE UNIONISM

In September, 1884, the S.D.F. defined its attitude towards British trade unionism. John Burns was the chief agitator against the trade unionist leaders who had relapsed into Liberalism. He accused them of venality and lack of principle, and called upon working men to rouse themselves from the slumber in which they had been sunk since 1848.[1] Two months later the Executive Committee of the Federation published a manifesto to the Trade Unions, reproaching them with having forgotten how to fight and with having made peace, or even concluded an alliance, with capitalism. They made no reference to the class struggle that really existed and must go on between Labour and Capital. They proclaimed by silence a truce where there was no truce. The trade unions represented only the merest fraction of the workers. Yet they pretended to speak for Labour. The trade unions unhappily only thought of improving the social position of the more favoured few affiliated to their body, and they were blind to the misery of the masses. They failed to see that it was not improvement but revolution that was wanted. The raising of wages, the shortening of hours, were the loftiest things for which they strove. The trade unions must understand that it was the wage-system that must be fought. Private property in the means of production must cease, and associated

[1] *Justice*, July 19, 1884.

labour with equitable distribution of its produce must take its place.[1]

This manifesto inaugurated the era of hostility between the Trade unions and social democracy, which lasted for more than a decade, and gave rise to polemical excesses on both sides. The social democrats condemned trade unionism root and branch, while the old trade unionist leaders proclaimed themselves the bulwark against revolution. Gradually, however, these excesses and enmities ceased. With the rise of the New Unionism and the formation of the Independent Labour Party, both camps, socialism and Labour, arrived at a better and truer appreciation of their respective spheres of action. A current of ideas more friendly to trade unionism set in among the S.D.F. societies in the North of England, whose members began to urge a revision of the S.D.F. views concerning trade unionism. At the seventeenth annual conference (1897) of the S.D.F. the Executive recommended all members of the Federation to join trade unions and co-operative societies, because these were organisations tending to the improvement of the conditions of the working classes. At the same time the members were called upon to do their best for the education of the trade unionists in socialism, and to extend their political support to trade unionists and co-operators as a means to the promotion of the socialist aim and end. The mover of this resolution, Dr. Edward Aveling, speaking in support of it, declared that it was high time to make an authoritative declaration on the relation between the S.D.F. and trade unionism, Everyone was aware that the opinions of the Federation on this matter were divided. It was the duty of socialists to permeate the trade unions and co-operative societies with collectivist views, since the ideas of the organised working men were moving in a socialist direction. The resolution was seconded by Dan Irving, who stated that the opinions of some social democrats were repellent to trade unionists. After a rather lengthy discussion, in which all views found expression, the resolution was carried by 46 votes to two.[2]

[1] *Justice*, September 6, 1884.

[2] Report of XVII. Annual Conference of the S.D.F., 1897, p. 20

At the twenty-second annual conference (1902) the question of the relation of the S.D.F. to trade unionism received further elucidation. Harry Quelch, editor of the *Justice*, moved the following resolution on behalf of the Executive :—

" In view of the increasing tendency of the Trade Unions to enter into politics[1] . . . the Conference recommends all members of the S.D.F. to become active members of their trade unions so far as possible, and to bestir themselves to lead their political activities into socialist channels. Whilst expressly laying stress on the view that the collective ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange must be the objective of every actual movement of the working class, and that this object can only be attained by an energetic class-war until the working class has achieved its emancipation from class-rule—the Conference again confirms the friendly attitude of the S.D.F. to trade unionism and similar organisations and recognises them as corporate bodies of working men, who have combined in order to fight the capitalists. Whilst we decline to form an alliance with the trade unions which might bind us to support men and measures with which the S.D.F. cannot agree, we recommend the affiliated societies to cultivate friendly relations with the trade unions, and we assure the trade unions that we sympathise with them in their fight for better conditions and are ready to work hand in hand with them as soon as they are willing to adopt socialist measures." [2]

The theoretical phases, through which the S.D.F. passed in the years between 1894 and 1902, already indicate that in the meantime considerable political changes must have occurred in Great Britain, and particularly in the ranks of Labour. It is indeed not possible to continue the history of the S.D.F. from 1901 onwards without continually referring to the other socialist organisations, social reform societies and Labour politics, with the history of which we have still to deal.

[1] The Labour Party was formed in the year 1900.
[2] Report of the XXII. Annual Conference, 1902, p. 19–20.

XIV

THE FABIAN SOCIETY

I.—ORIGIN AND NAME

Among the many societies for social reform, which came into existence in the years from 1870 to 1890, none has exercised so marked and beneficial an influence on educated public opinion and on legislation as the Fabian Society. In 1882 several persons met in London for the purpose of the study of ethics. The leading spirit was Professor Thomas Davidson, who was born in Scotland, worked as an educationist in the United States of America, and from time to time visited Great Britain. He was essentially an ethical anarchist communist, basing all improvement on self-reform. He gained a small group of adherents in London, to whom he submitted the plan of forming a Fellowship of the New Life with the view of reconstructing human life on the principle of highest morality. After a few months the majority, altogether a dozen men, came to the conclusion that social reform through legislation was at least as important as self-reform through ethical contemplation. They left the Fellowship and settled down to a study of social questions. The outcome of their studies was the formation of the Fabian Society (F.S.) in January, 1884. The Society adopted the name Fabian after Fabius Cunctator, the Roman general, whose tactics, which they undertook to imitate, they defined as follows: "For the right moment you must wait, as Fabius did most patiently when warring against Hannibal, though many censured his delays; but when the time comes you must strike hard, as Fabius did, or your waiting will be in vain, and fruitless." The author of this motto was Frank Podmore. The F.S. has been from the outset socialist, although its socialism was indefinite, or at least of no special mark. Its

members had been stimulated by the agitations of Henry George and H. M. Hyndman as well as by the writings of John Stuart Mill and the whole current of the new school of social science. None of the original members were distinguished by particular talents which could have raised them above the leaders of the Democratic Federation or of any of the social reform societies which then existed. A few months after its formation the F.S. began to attract the attention of two young intellectuals who were in search of light rather than heat, and who were destined to impart to the new organisation a special character. These men were George Bernard Shaw and Sidney Webb. Shaw was at that time an obscure journalist and budding novelist, Webb held a clerkship in the Colonial Office. To these two members the F.S. owes its importance in the history of British socialist thought. They were ably supported by Sidney Olivier, Graham Wallas, Mrs. Annie Besant, Hubert Bland, and William Clarke. All of them brought fresh, open, and critical minds to bear upon economic and social questions, and all of them were conscious that they had still a good deal to learn, before they could teach and act. They read Marx, Lassalle, Proudhon, Owen, as well as the English economists, Smith, Ricardo, Mill, Cliffe Leslie, and Cairnes, and gradually shook themselves free from the old socialist traditions. This period of study and preparation lasted from 1884 to 1887. It began with a rather mild disapproval of the " statements and phrases " of the Democratic Federation,[1] and it ended with a complete separation from the doctrinal bases and propagandist methods of all socialist organisations. These were years in which the leading Fabians took the offensive against the main doctrines of Marx, Owen, and Chartism. The leader of this campaign was Sidney Webb, an essentially constructive mind, and therefore more fitted for the council chamber and lecture room than for agitation and public demonstration. He found a most responsive and efficient spokesman in George Bernard Shaw, a born fighter and formidable controversialist. Were his ardent temperament and dour determination not counterbalanced by an analytical

[1] *Fabian Tracts*, No. 41, p. 21.

intellect averse from all romanticism, Shaw would have been a revolutionary leader.

Under the guidance of these men the Fabians have endeavoured to do as much for British socialism as was done for British liberalism, in the first decades of the nineteenth century, by the philosophical radicals with Jeremy Bentham and James Mill at their head.[1] The philosophical radicals were not a political party, and yet they succeeded in exercising a permanent influence on the reform movements and on the legislation of that period. Why should not the Fabians, then, be able to perform a similar function in their time? Theoretically, Bentham's efforts were directed against the system of law of nature, whose most famous exponents at that time were the followers of Rousseau. In a like manner Webb and Shaw brought their critical powers to bear upon the socialist deductions from Ricardian economics, as expounded by Marx and his disciples. In all the writings of the Fabian leaders up to the end of the nineteenth century, even in those that have no direct connection with socialism, the echoes of those battles are still audible. Further, Bentham's practical activities were directed against the landed oligarchy and in favour of democracy. Similarly, Webb and Shaw have always been opposed to the capitalist-liberal oligarchy. Bentham's formula was, "The greatest happiness of the greatest number." The Fabian formula is, "The greatest efficiency of the greatest number." The analogy is still closer. The philosophical radicals, for all their opposition to Rousseauism, arrived at the same conclusions as Rousseau. For all practical purposes it makes no difference whether democracy is deduced from the social contract or from utility. Similarly, it makes no difference whether socialism is to be established by reasoning from the labour value theory and class struggle or from the theory of rent and collective effort.

The analogy between philosophical radicalism and the Fabian Society renders it easier to define the character of the latter. The Fabian Society is neither a socialist party nor pre-eminently a school of socialist doctrines, but a group of men and women who

[1] *Fabian Tracts*, No. 51, p. 6.

are endeavouring to spread practical views on the immediate and pressing social problems, and to indicate the way for their embodiment in legislative or administrative measures. According to these views socialism is not a revolutionary movement of the working classes for the purpose of establishing some new form of society, nor is it an anti-parliamentary and an extra-national system of co-operation. It is the result of a long series of national problems, which have arisen out of the manifold economic, social, and spiritual changes that were taking place in the last century, and which must be dealt with by the nation if it desires to raise its efficiency and to continue its upward progress.

2.—FROM OWEN AND MARX TO WEBB

It has just been stated that Sidney Webb must be regarded as the real pioneer of Fabianism. He has been greatly assisted by the analytical powers and dialectical skill of G. B. Shaw, and to a higher degree by the social knowledge, ethical fervour, and great literary gifts of Mrs. Sidney Webb. His achievements are thus the result of the co-operative efforts of several minds. But so are the achievements of any inventor, discoverer, or philosopher and scientist. No man creates *ex nihilo*, but out of the materials supplied to him by his predecessors, his contemporaries, and his own experience. Yet, people are wont to trace back particular thoughts and actions to a particular man or woman who expressed or performed them in the most acceptable or satisfactory manner or at the proper time. In this sense do we speak here of the pioneering work of Sidney Webb with regard to Fabianism, though the assistance and contributions of G. B. Shaw and Mrs. Sidney Webb must by no means be ignored.

We shall be able the better to appreciate the work of Webb, if we compare it with that of his illustrious predecessors, Owen and Marx.

At the time when Owen entered on his socialist propaganda the working classes were not organised and not conscious of the strength which unity could give them, and they were on the whole uneducated and helpless. The State was entirely oligarchic and

an instrument of oppression and repression,—a machinery for war, police, and taxation. Anything in the nature of welfare, improvement, and social justice, was not regarded as the business of the State. Under these circumstances Owen could not help coming to the conclusion that the salvation of the people must come from some self-sacrificing redeemer, some heroic educator and organiser, who would use the new resources, which were unlocked by science, for the benefit of the working classes. Parliamentary action was futile, since the State had nothing to do with the welfare of the masses. Trade union action was of no avail, since the possessing and ruling classes were united against the people; capital, machinery, and soldiery, would defeat any effort the working classes might make towards improving their condition. Besides, the rich as well as the poor were basing their ideas, feelings, laws, and aspirations on an error,—on the cardinal error that man made his own character, whereas in reality the character of man was made for him by circumstances. These circumstances were created by private property and competition, and therefore resulted in social evil. A change of circumstances was necessary—a change from private property and competition to communism and co-operation; and this change could only be achieved by a hero of rationalism, who has won the respect and the hearts of the people.

When Marx, armed with the evolutionary philosophy and positive science of his age, appeared on the scene, the working classes formed already an army, valiantly fighting against heavy odds for political and economic emancipation. The landed oligarchy, too, was engaged in a losing fight against the rising tide of middle-class liberalism. The State was gradually assuming the character of a protector of child and female labour, while the adult working population was being left to the tender mercies of competition, of supply and demand and the struggle for life, without any direct power to influence legislation or the conditions of labour, and this in an era of enormous accumulations of wealth and the accession to political power of the middle classes. Marx's theories are the adequate expression of this period; they epitomize the conditions created by a fiercely

competitive economic life, non-democratic constitution, and a society split up in antagonistic warring classes.

Between the years 1865 and 1885 Great Britain entered on a period of change. Thought was moving away from its old moorings. The rise of the working classes could no longer be denied; their influence on legislation and the wage-contract was visibly on the increase. They had obtained the franchise and the legalisation of trade unionism. The British Constitution was turned into a democracy. Old liberalism, with its doctrine of individual interest as the best guide to happiness, was giving way to the collectivist theory of State and municipal action for social reform.

It must, however, not be supposed that these changes were clearly defined and manifest to all. They were tendencies rather than accomplished facts,—tendencies often neutralised by old modes of thought and action. But Webb saw them clearly enough. Experience is, after all, not a passive mental reflection of the external world, but the product of external phenomena and of the operations of mind according to its capacity and equipment. At any rate, it appeared to Webb that it was no longer admissible to allow a socialist theory which was grounded on past conditions to continue unchallenged and unrevised. A democratic State which was prepared to take upon itself social reform duties, a working class with economic influence and power, a nation with a growing social conscience, could not be treated from the standpoint of revolution and class struggle. The fundamental socialist concepts needed a new basis and new methods more in harmony with new conditions. Socialism had to be adapted to democracy. This adaptation has been performed by Sidney Webb. It represents the transition from Marxism to Fabianism, or from social revolutionary doctrine to social practice.

Rightly understood, the pre-democratic socialists of the Chartist or Marxist type could not but think of a revolution, since they had first to sweep away the old State in order to create a political mechanism for a collectivist re-organisation of society. In a democratic society, and in a State which acknowledges the

duty of carrying social legislation, there was no need for a revolution in order to create a new political mechanism, for it was in existence and needed but to be used. The real question, therefore, was, How was this State to be used in order to get systematic social reform ?

The Owenites went outside the State for the purpose of building up a co-operative commonwealth, and they elaborated its general outlines, and even its details, by pen and pencil. The Marxists scorned all sketches and all questionings for the details of the future State, but urged upon the working classes to fight against the existing order, to obtain political power, to seize the State for the purpose of the abolition of the capitalist system which obstructed the birth of the new society, or rather the collectivist forces which the present society created ; this constituted the real mission of the socialists. Webb investigates the particular evils of society, points out the remedy for each of them in accordance with the general principles of socialism, and endeavours to persuade the nation that those remedies are practicable and suitable for legislation. The mission of the socialists was therefore to acquire knowledge by means of specialised research into the various manifestations of economic and social life, to acquaint themselves with the machinery of legislation and administration. and to put their knowledge and experience at the disposal of all political agencies. There was no reason for socialists to wait for the social revolution. The realisation of socialism had begun from the moment when the State became accessible to social reform ideas, and the employers of labour admitted collective bargaining and submitted to State and trade unionist intervention.

The Owenites advised the working men to abandon political and trade unionist action, and to devote their energies and funds to collective production. The Marxists advised the working men to conquer political power and to use their trade unions for social revolutionary purposes. Webb asks the working men to vote straight and send social reformers to Parliament in sufficient numbers to form a majority and to assume the reins of government. He further advises them to work for the extension of

the principles of democracy to factory, workshop, mine and field.

Owenite socialism was idyllic; Marxist socialism was revolutionary and theoretical; Fabian socialism is everyday politics for social regeneration.

The key of Owenism is the doctrine of circumstances in relation to the formation of human character. The philosophy which served Marx in his analysis of capitalist society and in the mobilisation of the working class for socialism, consists of the labour-value theory with class warfare as the dynamic force. The socialism of Webb is based on the extension of the theory of rent and on the growth of the social conscience of the nation.

Webb stands on the shoulders of J. S. Mill. He is the direct mental descendant of the last great Utilitarian. He has taken up the work of socialism where Mill left it—namely, half-way between individualism and social reform, and has carried it a good distance further. We have seen how Mill was groping for a theory of social reform by means of the law of rent, but did not go beyond land reform. Webb, on the other hand, went on and crossed the sphere of movable capital. Looking back over the record of human progress there appeared to him one main economic characteristic underlying every form of society. As soon as production was sufficiently advanced to furnish more than maintenance, there arose a struggle for the surplus product. The individuals or classes who possessed social power had at all times, consciously or unconsciously, made use of that power for the purpose of appropriating the surplus product and leaving to the great majority of their fellows practically nothing beyond the means of subsistence according to the current local standard. This surplus product possessed the character of rent. In relation to agriculture it was fertility, mineral contents, position, or even the mere presence of human beings, that combined to make the net advantages of one piece of land very different from that of another. This differential advantageousness, rising in scale from the very margin of cultivation to the most superior sites, accounted for the phenomenon of economic rent. It was this law of rent that formed the economic ferment of our generation.

Under unrestricted private ownership and free competition, with the motive of pecuniary self-interest in full play, the man in possession of any position economically superior to the very margin of cultivation or to the very limit of advantageousness was finding himself able to retain for himself the whole differential advantage of that position over and above the yield of the worst in use. This law of rent held good not of land only. All productive labour was but man's method of earning a living; and in economics, "as Whately long ago observed, rent is a genus, of which land rent is but one species." Alike in all capitalist enterprise—in manufacture, in transport, in distribution, as well as in agriculture—the factors of production were different one from another in net advantageousness no less than the land itself. The world of business was as diverse in its productivity as the various classes of soil of a farm. In one industry every operative would be using, on an average, a thousand pounds worth of plant and machinery. In another, carried on in the very same street, the operatives work with a total plant worth perhaps a few pounds. A census of production would show striking differences in the output per head of the working people in the same branches of industry. The differences between the qualities of land would find their analogy in the difference between the sites of the factories and commercial offices, use of inventions and discoveries, raw materials and tools, forms of organisation and management. And as the wages and prices were determined by marginal labour the differential advantages of the more favoured establishments consisted of enormous industrial rents, the greatest portion of which was unearned increment, since the special advantages which resulted in the differential rents were not the effects of the mental and bodily efforts of the capitalists, and their rewards bore no relation whatever to their social services.

The advantages which capitalists enjoyed were the effects of social effort. All who were rendering services to society contributed to the growth of civilised life, to the achievements of science, to the increase of wealth, and more efficient forms of organisation. This did not, however, imply that the distribution of the produce

should be effected on the principle of equality. But every worker should be guaranteed a minimum of civilised existence, and the more able should receive a higher remuneration as rent of ability. As long as the social conscience of the nation was not yet developed enough to cause men to perform their duty to society without regard to the degree of remuneration, equality of distribution was impossible. Meanwhile it was but bare justice to afford every willing worker a minimum of bodily and mental existence, corresponding to the existing level of civilisation, in order to keep him in efficiency and to render him capable of rising in the scale of social life and earning a rent of ability.

From these considerations follows a social policy which is different from that of both Owen and Marx. (1) The struggle is not to be fought out between rationalist and theological views, nor between the capitalist class and the working class, but between the overwhelming majority of the nation and the appropriators of differential rent—between those who make inventions and discoveries, or who are busy with scientific and social research, who organise industries, design machinery, perform bodily labour, and those who grow rich on these social services merely because they invest capital; (2) Since differential rent or unearned increment is the result of social labour and general development it ought to be utilised for the good of the whole society; (3) A government which is seriously bent on social reform must therefore turn its attention to the industrial and agricultural rent and use it in the interests of the whole community, partly by means of taxation, partly by municipalisation and nationalisation.[1]

Webb, being always in contact with social realities, has never ceased to study socialism. He professes no dogmas or final truths; he has no theory from which he would separate with regret. He brings an open mind to every new development of socialist and economic theory. He has been, for instance, one of the very small number of State socialists whom syndicalism has

[1] *Fabian Tracts*, Nos. 7, 15, 41, 51, 70, 108, 159; *Fabian Essays*, 1889; *New Statesman*, April–July, 1914. (Compare H. G. Wells, *New Worlds for Old*, 1908, Chapter xii., §1.)

not frightened into an *a priori* condemnation of its tenets and tendencies, but who have made an impartial study of it.

Only in one respect Webb appears to have committed an error. He has not appreciated to the full the historic mission of the working class in bringing about socialism. His mental descent from Mill and the new school of political economy on the one hand, and his implicit belief in British democratic institutions on the other, have not allowed him to see the kernel of truth which the Marxist theory of class warfare contains. Marx has not idolised nor idealised the proletariat; he took the working class for what they really are—an oppressed class, to whom the avenues of art and science and all mental culture are closed; but he saw quite clearly that the material interests, needs, and efforts of a social class, when in conformity with the general development of society, are a powerful lever of progress. It is only from this consideration that Marx has appealed to the proletariat and endeavoured to make them conscious of their conditions and efforts. From this, and from no other, point of view can independent Labour politics and a socialist Labour programme be justified.

3.—AIM AND POLICY OF FABIANISM

The clearest insight into the aims and policy of the Fabians is afforded by their official report to the International Socialist and Trade Union Congress in London (1896). The object of the Fabian Society was to persuade the nation to make their political constitution thoroughly democratic, and so to socialise their industries as to make the livelihood of the people entirely independent of capitalism. The Fabian Society, far from holding aloof from other bodies, was urging its members to join them and was permeating them with Fabian ideas. Almost all organisations and movements contained elements making for socialism. The Fabian Society was constitutional in its attitude, and its methods, which were those usual in political life in England. It stood for democracy, which meant simply the control of the administration by freely elected representatives of the people. It repudiated, however, all conceptions of democracy as a system by which

all the technical work of national administration and the appointment of public officials should be carried on by means of the referendum or by any other form of direct popular election. Socialism, as understood by the Fabians, meant the organisation and conduct of the necessary industries of the country, and the appropriation of all forms of economic rent of land and capital by the nation as a whole, through the most suitable public authorities, parochial, municipal, provincial, or central. The United Kingdom now possessed an elaborate democratic State machinery, graduated from the parish council up to the central government, which could be used for the purpose of carrying socialist measures. The difficulty was not to secure more political power for the people, but to persuade them to make proper use of the power they already possessed. The Fabian Society did not direct its appeals to any particular class, but to men and women of all classes who saw the evils of society and desired to remedy them. It was, therefore, endeavouring to rouse social compunction by making the public conscious of the evil condition of society under the present system. This it was doing by collecting and publishing authentic and impartial statistical tracts, compiled from official sources. Socialism needed light rather than heat. The Fabians discarded such phrases as " the abolition of the wage system." Socialism by no means involved the abolition of wages, but was aiming at the establishment of standard allowances for the maintenance of all workers of the community in its own service, as an alternative to wages fixed by the competition of destitute men and women working for private employment, as well as for commercial profits, commissions, and all other speculative and competitive forms of remuneration. The Fabian Society opposed all pretensions to hamper the socialisation of industry with equal wages, equal hours of labour, equal official status, or equal authority for everyone. Such conditions were not only impracticable, but incompatible with equality of subordination to the common interests. The Fabians steadfastly discountenanced all schemes for securing to any person or any group of persons " the whole product of their labour." Moreover they recognised

that wealth was social in its origin and must be social in its distribution, since the evolution of industry had made it impossible to distinguish the particular contribution that each person made to the common product, or to ascertain its value.

These declarations make it easier to understand the programme and methods of the Fabians.

4.—PROGRAMME AND METHODS

The declaration of principles on the "basis" of the Fabian Society is as follows:—

"THE FABIAN SOCIETY consists of socialists.

"It therefore aims at the re-organisation of Society by the emancipation of land and industrial capital from individual and class ownership, and the vesting of them in the community for the general benefit. In this way only can the natural and acquired advantages of the country be equitably shared by the whole people.

"The Society accordingly works for the extinction of private property in land and of the consequent individual appropriation, in the form of rent, of the price paid for permission to use the earth, as well as for the advantages of superior soils and sites.

"The Society, further, works for the transfer to the community of the administration of such industrial capital as can conveniently be managed socially. For, owing to the monopoly of the means of production in the past, industrial inventions and the transformation of surplus income into capital have mainly enriched the proprietary class, the worker being now dependent on that class for leave to earn a living.

"If these measures be carried out, without compensation (though not without such relief to expropriated individuals as may seem fit to the community), rent and interest will be added to the reward of labour, the idle class now living on the labour of others will necessarily disappear, and practical equality of opportunity will be maintained by the spontaneous action of economic forces with much less interference with personal liberty than the present system entails.

"For the attainment of these ends the Fabian Society looks

to the spread of socialist opinions, and the social and political changes consequent thereon, including the establishment of equal citizenship for men and women. It seeks to achieve these ends by the general dissemination of knowledge as to the relation between the individual and Society in its economic, ethical, and political aspects."

The leaders of the Fabian Society, believing that it was possible to turn the whole power of British political action in the direction of distinctly socialist reforms, are urging upon the members to exercise continuously their full influence in local political affairs. The work of the Board of Guardians, the County, Town, District or Parish Council, the local political associations or clubs, would offer to Fabians many opportunities not only for valuable socialist propaganda, but also for important work in carrying socialist principles into practice. The Fabians should therefore join some local political association, and endeavour to become a member of its executive council and one of its representatives to the central political bodies for London and the United Kingdom respectively. In short, active political work and full exercise of citizenship in the interest of social reform is the duty of the Fabians. It is therefore particularly important that they should make themselves acquainted with the actual machinery of public administration in the districts in which they reside, and with the parliamentary constituency in which they are electors. Finally, the Fabians should cultivate friendly relations with, and afford all possible assistance to, the other socialist organisations in their districts.

The Fabian Society appears to form an institute for social engineering. It always combines an ounce of theory with a ton of practice. Having learned from experience that socialists cannot have their own way in everything any more than any other people, the Fabian Society recognises that in a democratic community compromise is a necessary condition of social progress.

These methods differentiate the Fabian Society from any other socialist organisation in the United Kingdom. For the first time in the history of socialism we see socialists who do not desire to separate themselves from the nation by forming com-

munistic or ethical colonies or by organising the working classes into a State within the State, but who are endeavouring to leaven the national life with their ideas and strengthen the State with their practical measures. Their work is social citizenship pure and simple. The nation having arrived at a new phase of its development, in which it needs new ideas and measures for its existence, the Fabian Society has voluntarily trained itself for this national mission.

The Fabian Society was instrumental in forming the Labour Party and has been represented on its executive by one delegate. Although the Fabians, as has been shown, are averse from forming a political party of their own and, least of all, a class party, they promoted the idea of an independent Labour party by their two Tracts, entitled *A Fabian Election Manifesto* (1892) and *A Plan of Campaign for Labour* (1894). Several of the leading men of the Fabian Society have of late largely identified themselves with the Labour Party and the socialist Labour movement.

There is, of course, no complete unity of thought and aims in the Fabian Society. Since 1906, when H. G. Wells, the foremost sociological novelist of Great Britain, who was then a member of the Fabian Society, raised the banner of revolt, a certain amount of opposition to the old policy has been growing. Some of its members have been advocating its transformation into a socialist party. Others have been asking for a closer identification with the Labour Party. In the last few years some of the younger members, mostly University men and publicists who are in touch with syndicalism and industrial Unionism, have been working for guild socialism, with the importance of which we shall deal in a later chapter.

5.—LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC WORK

The first fruits of the economic and historical studies and researches of the leading minds of the Society were the *Fabian Essays in Socialism*, published in 1889, republished since several times, reaching a total number of 40,000 copies. Three of the essays, which Sidney Webb and Bernard Shaw contributed,

stand forth as masterpieces of socialist thought and economic reasoning. Webb excels in economic history, Shaw in elucidation of some economic categories and in summarising British socialist history. The *Essays* form the groundwork of Fabianism. While the latter are calculated to influence the educated, the *Fabian Tracts* are meant to instruct all intelligent men and women who desire either a good summary of some socialist question or guidance in carrying out social reform measures. They are published in the form of pamphlets of about twenty-four pages at the price of one penny. There are now about 190 Tracts published, the total circulation of which must have reached by now far over one million copies. Most of them were written by experts. The following deserve special mention: *Socialism, true and false*, by Sidney Webb, explanatory of the meaning of modern socialism; *Facts for Socialists*, a statistical survey of the distribution of the national income amongst the classes, and of the resulting conditions of the people; *Socialism and Superior Brains*, by Bernard Shaw, arguing both against the crude notion of equality of income and against the appropriation of surplus social labour by the owners of capital; *Rent and Value*, by Bernard Shaw; *The necessary Basis of Society*, by Sidney Webb; *Public Service versus Private Expenditure*, by Sir Oliver Lodge; *The Moral Aspects of Socialism*, by Sidney Ball; *Capital and Land*, pleading for socialism against single-tax; *Twentieth Century Politics*, by S. Webb; *The Fabian Society, its early history*, by Bernard Shaw; *The Case for a legal Minimum Wage*, by Mrs. Sidney Webb; *State Control of Trusts*, by H. W. Macrosty; showing the tendency towards concentration of capital; *State Purchase of Railways*, by Emil Davies; *The War and the Worker*, by Sidney Webb, dealing with some immediate measures to prevent unemployment and relieve distress.

But the *magnum opus* of Fabian reform is the *Minority Report*, written by Mrs. and Mr. Sidney Webb, as the *Report of the Minority of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws*, 1909. It constitutes a code of social measures for the abolition of the immediate causes of poverty and the assistance of the destitute in order to enable them to become more efficient and useful

members of society. It is a code of practical social reform, which in peaceful, slowly moving times, might have been read and used all over the civilised world, with a view to drafting reform measures, even as Jeremy Bentham's penal codes and constitutional outlines were consulted in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Time is, however, out of joint. After the overthrow of such eminently retarding and conservative factors as the Russian and German Empires, social evolution is moving and will move at an accelerating rate, despite some occasional stoppages and breaks. It is, on the whole, no more a question of palliating poverty, but the reformation of the whole system of social life.

6.—FABIAN (LABOUR) RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

Modern socialism, the starting point of which is social experience, naturally implies investigation into the economic structure of society. Still, so long as socialism bears a doctrinal character and is aiming at a catastrophic subversion of the capitalist system, its investigation and research work is extensive rather than intensive ; its scientific object being the attainment of broad generalisation. As soon, however, as socialism has overcome the doctrinal stage, or as soon as modern socialists in a democratic State find an opportunity for starting practical work, their investigations and researches become specialised or confined to particular phenomena. Socialism turns into a series of social reforms, each of which must be thoroughly examined. The socialist agitator gives place to the social investigator. The Fabians have long felt the need for a special research department, but only in the last years has a start been made to meet it. In 1912 the Fabian Research Department was established which began an exhaustive examination of all the existing forms of control of industry, apart from mere capitalism ; of trade unionism in all its developments ; of the co-operative movement ; of the organisation of industry by public authorities ; and of land and rural problems.

In 1916 the Research Department opened its membership to all socialists and trade unionists. At the same time it invited

affiliation from Labour bodies. Its connection with the Fabian Society thus became nominal or personal only. In 1918 its constitution was altered; it placed half control over the work into the hands of Labour bodies, and its name was changed to Labour Research Department. It is now (1919) the main armoury of the advanced trade unions, and the sociological department of the British Labour movement. Young Fabianism has thus removed the reproach from the Fabian Society of superciliously deprecating the Marxist theory of class warfare.

Since its rise in 1912, the Research Department, with the assistance of the Webbs and the older school of Fabianism, as well as under the stimulus of the younger socialist and Labour Fabians, like G. D. H. Cole, W. Mellor, and R. Page Arnot, has accomplished an enormous work.

The main problems of the Research Department divide under two heads,—first, to examine into all experiments in collectivist production, distribution, and exchange which have in the last years been made not on a pre-arranged socialist plan or with the idea of carrying socialism into practice, but rather in consequence of the growing need of society to escape from the baleful effects of individualism, such experiments bearing testimony to the gradual and unconscious evolution of society toward collectivist economies; secondly, to examine into the activities of the various societies of the working class which are either fighting for the control of the means of production and distribution, or are engaged in peacefully reorganising production and distribution on co-operative lines.

On all these subjects a very extensive collection of material has been made and is being prepared for publication. There are now four sub-committees at work. Sub-committee I. has undertaken a careful inquiry into the feelings and desires, objects and methods, of all the English Syndicalists to whom access could be obtained. A detailed study has been made (chiefly from documents and books) of French syndicalism; and a less elaborate one of the United States varieties of syndicalism and "Industrial Unionism." A report has been drawn up by G. D. H. Cole on "What Validity does our Enquiry show Syndica-

lism to Possess," and another by H. J. Gillespie and W. Mellor on the nature and extent of syndicalism in the United Kingdom.

With regard to trade unionism, a complete survey has been made of trade union organisation in the United Kingdom in relation to the question of amalgamation or federation of unnecessary separate unions. A personal inquiry has been made into the organisation of trade unionism in Germany, with special reference to the relation of local branch to head office and of sectional craft to the industry as a whole. An elaborate memorandum on this has been prepared by W. Stephen Sanders. Personal enquiries into the organisation of trade unionism in Belgium and France have been made, and memoranda prepared, by C. M. Lloyd. Schemes for the improvement of trade union organisation in Great Britain have been prepared, and are being considered and revised by detailed enquiries.

The well-known attempts (1913–4) of the miners, railway men, and transport workers of the United Kingdom to form an alliance for purposes of common defence may show the importance of such investigations. The triple alliance of the miners, railwaymen, and transport workers could, in the event of a well-prepared but suddenly declared general strike, paralyse the economic life of the country.

Sub-committee II. is studying the real constitutions and position of all the associations of producers (self-governing workshops) existing in the United Kingdom. A list has been made, and particulars obtained, of all those that have failed within the last twenty-five years. Studies have been made (from books) of similar associations in France, Belgium, and Italy. An elaborate memorandum of provisional conclusions as to these associations in England has been prepared by Mrs. Bernard Drake. Profit-sharing and Industrial Co-partnership schemes have been re-examined and submitted to the detailed criticism of trade unionists and other workmen, economists, and employers.

Sub-committee III. has for its task the study of the actual workings and results of the co-operative societies. A report on the features thus revealed has been prepared by Mrs. W. P. Reeves.

Municipal trading forms the subject of sub-committee IV. The relation of trading municipalities to their employees has been investigated in detail. The actual organisation and working of the manufacturing operations of a large Government Department have been personally studied. The statistics of the trading operations of all the municipalities in the United Kingdom have been analysed for further investigation. A detailed monograph on the comparative results of municipal and joint stock enterprise with regard to electricity has been prepared by C. Ashmore Baker.

The land and rural problem, which may be regarded as one of the most important for Great Britain, has been investigated by a special committee and a report prepared by H. D. Harben. Likewise, the subject of workmen's insurance, either by State or private agencies, is being carefully enquired into by the Research Department.

For the Committee of Enquiry into the Control of Industry, the Webbs drafted Reports on *Co-operative Production and Profit Sharing* (1914), *State and Municipal Enterprise* (1914), *Professional Associations*, four parts (1917), which were published as supplements to the *New Statesman*, a weekly journal, founded in 1913 by some leading Fabians. The financial problems resulting from the War were dealt with in a volume *How to Pay for the War*, which was edited by Sidney Webb.

The researches into the latest developments of trade unionism have been under the guidance of G. D. H. Cole, whose *Introduction to Trade Unionism* (1918), *Payment of Wages* (1918), and *Self-Government of Industry* (fourth edition, 1919) have brought the economic movement of the British working-class into connection with the most recent tendencies of socialist thought. Under his stimulus the theory of trade unionism has extended its boundaries far beyond the region which the Webbs had marked out for it. Cole has found able collaborators in Page Arnot and Margaret I. Postgate.

The Research Department is also publishing *Monthly Circulars*, dealing with all matters of interest to Labour and socialism from a national as well as international point of view, and *Labour Year*

Books (1916, 1918), giving reviews of the whole Labour and socialist movement at home and abroad.

7.—EDUCATIONAL WORK AND WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

Increased attention has been given to the organisation of educational work among the socialists themselves. In 1906 a Fabian Summer School was established. Three or four times a year for periods varying from one week to three months, the School is filled with members and their friends, who are using their holidays for the purpose of attending lectures on economic, social, and political subjects, and for arranging conferences to discuss special problems connected with the Research Department. Another educational development has been the organisation of classes in economics, industrial history, and local government for the members of the socialist societies.

This growth of educational work has given to the various University Fabian societies their real mission. They are no more satisfied with debating sociological questions, but are endeavouring to bring the Fabian Society into closer touch with the newer currents of the Labour movement and to destroy the prejudices of some of the older Fabians against the so-called proletarisation of socialism. More and more they are coming to regard socialism, trade unionism, and Labour politics as the streams of one great movement towards the reorganisation of society on a collectivist and democratic basis. The University Fabian Societies of Oxford, Cambridge, London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Manchester, Birmingham, Aberystwith, Liverpool, and Sheffield organised themselves into a Federation, governed by an executive consisting of one representative from each society together with two national representatives. The University Socialist Federation (U.S.F.) forms the backbone of the Fabian Research Department.

Finally, the female members of the Fabian Society, believing that the emancipation of women constituted an integral part of socialism, formed in 1908 a Fabian Women's Group. Its promoters were of opinion that there was a close analogy between the advance of women and the growth of socialism,

and that this connection needed to be made clear. They held that the complete political and economic emancipation of women was essential to any real socialisation of our national life. They looked forward to a time when each individual should be economically independent, with ever-widening personal freedom. Its main object is to study and to strengthen the economic position of women and to bring them into line with men in the advance towards paid work for all, for the equal advantage of all. It asks for equality of opportunity for women as for men: it asserts that if half the community is to remain in a weak economic position, progress for the other half must, in the nature of things, be retarded. By "equality of opportunity" Fabian women do not necessarily mean "similarity of opportunity," either as between the sexes or as between individuals. It seeks to clear up the present popular confusion of judgment, which at one moment exaggerates the nature of the essential disabilities of the woman-worker, and the next ignores those disabilities altogether when determining the social burden to be imposed upon her. Its object has been, and is, to discover how far difference of sex-function must necessarily cause a difference of mental outlook and a differentiation of work. Lack of knowledge of existing conditions, their causes and history, insufficient data upon which to base theories or demands—these were the first wants it was necessary to supply. It was felt that, if women are to be freed from political and economic subjection, they must examine their position for themselves and express their needs from their own standpoint.

The subject first investigated was that of women's natural disabilities as workers. An endeavour was made to discover the differences in ability for productive work involved in difference of sex-function, first in women not actively engaged in child-bearing, and secondly in mothers with their special disabilities. The next step was to investigate the position of women as workers and as consumers in this country in former ages. The Group has begun its study of women as producers and consumers in this country at the present time. Eighteen lectures of this series have been given, and it was decided to produce a series of books

of which the papers and discussions of the Group meetings should form the nucleus. The first volume, *Women Workers in Seven Professions*, is the first of this series.

Several Women's Group pamphlets, dealing with social questions from the woman's standpoint, has been published by the Fabian Society:

(1) *The Working Life of Women*, by Miss B. L. Hutchins. A collection of statistics, showing the relative age and numbers of women workers. (2) *Family Life on £1 a week*, by Mrs. Pember Reeves. The now well-known collection of family budgets, which has since formed the nucleus of *Round About a Pound a Week*, a book recently published. (3) *Women and Prisons*, by Mrs. Charlotte Wilson and Miss Helen Blagg. This pamphlet utilises the information obtained by a sub-committee of the Group from suffragist prisoners. It deals with the English penal system for women and makes suggestions for its reform. (4) *The Economic Foundation of the Woman Movement*, by Miss Mabel Atkinson; and (5) *Women in Agriculture: their Work and Payment*, a historical survey by Mrs. Charlotte Wilson.

Besides the above, the Group published two summaries of the lectures upon the Disabilities of Women as Workers, and upon the Disabilities of Mothers as Workers.

Thus in various ways the members of the Fabian Women's Group are working strenuously for the economic independence which they believe to be the sole remedy for various social ills; they are endeavouring to establish, as the result of economic investigation, that this solution must ultimately be accepted by all those who believe in equality of opportunity for all citizens, irrespective of sex.

All this work has been accomplished, or is being accomplished, by a numerically small society. In 1914 the number of members was less than 3,000; its income, apart from that of the Research Department, was about £4,000. During the war (1914–1918) the lecture propaganda of the Fabian Society practically ceased, and the income suffered considerable diminution, but some compensation for this was a large increase in the sale and distribution of its pamphlets and books.

Earlier or later a social historian may arise who will do with regard to the Fabian Society what Leslie Stephen has so admirably accomplished for the English Utilitarians. Meanwhile, these lines will perhaps show that the subject is worthy of the attention of all who take an interest in social reform. The future historian will find some guidance for his work in the *History of the Fabian Society* (1915), published by E. R. Pease, who, since the inception of the Society till 1912, was its secretary.

XV

INDEPENDENT LABOUR POLITICS

I.—ONSLAUGHTS ON LIBERAL LABOUR

It became increasingly clear ever since the last of the great unemployed demonstrations in 1887 that neither the Social Democratic Federation (S.D.F.) nor the Socialist League (S.L.) had made any impression on the organised working class of Great Britain. Out of the turmoil and travails of those years no socialist Labour party arose ; only the economic action of the unskilled London workmen received a temporary access of strength. Independent socialists and Labour leaders gradually took stock of the situation and arrived at the conclusion that it was much less important to emphasise the aim and end of socialism than to organise the working men for independent Labour politics. The S.D.F., it appeared, had put the cart before the horse. The German socialist, Frederick Engels, who had spent the better part of his life in England, wrote in May, 1887, that the immediate question of British socialism was the formation of a Labour party with an independent class programme, which, if successful, would thrust the S.D.F. and the S.L. into the background.[1] The Fabian, E. R. Pease, wrote at that time of his society : " The chief aim of our plan is the formation of a distinct Labour party in Parliament."[2] Similar ideas were growing in Scotland and the North of England. James Keir Hardie, speaking as delegate of the Ayrshire Miners at the Trade Union Congress in 1887, strongly protested against Labour representatives identifying themselves with the Liberals, who " are in direct antagonism to the working classes."[3] Since

[1] *Sorge's Briefwechsel*, p. 263 (H. W. Dietz Verlag, Stuttgart).
[2] *To-Day*, 1887, p. 171.
[3] Frank Rose, *The Coming Force*, p. 47.

1887 sporadic attempts at organising local labour associations in opposition to Liberal Labour were made in Yorkshire. It was in Scotland and in the North of England that the idea of independent Labour politics took practical shape. Since 1832 it has been increasingly manifest that London may be able to produce socialist and Labour ideas, but is incapable of carrying them into effect, while the North of England and Scotland possessed both originating and executive capacity. In 1888 a parliamentary by-election took place in Mid-Lanark, where Hardie, ably supported by H. H. Champion, Robert Smillie, Dr. G. B. Clark, and other socialists, came forward as an independent Labour candidate in opposition both to the Liberals and Conservatives, and polled 712 votes. Arising out of this contest, the Scottish socialists, led by Cuninghame Graham, Dr. Stirling Robertson, George Gerrie, and Keir Hardie, met a few months later at Glasgow and formed the Scottish Labour Party, which adopted the following programme :—

"Adult suffrage with abolition of plural voting. Triennial Parliaments ; elections to be all held on one day. Simplification of registration laws, so as to prevent removal from one constituency to another disfranchising an elector. Payment of members by the State, and of official election expenses from the rates ; second ballots. Home Rule for each separate nationality or country in the British Empire, with an Imperial Parliament for Imperial affairs. Abolition of the House of Lords and all hereditary offices. Nationalisation of land and minerals. Labour Legislation : an Eight Hours Bill ; abolition of the present Poor Law system and substitution of State insurance to provide for sickness, accident, death, or old age ; arbitration courts, with power to settle disputes and fix a minimum wage ; weekly payment of wages ; homestead law to protect furniture and tools to the value of £20 from seizure for debt ; application of the Factories and Workshops Acts to all premises, whether public or private, in which work is performed. Prohibition of the liquor traffic. No war to be entered upon without the consent of the House of Commons. Free education ; Boards to have power to provide food for children. Disestablishment. Reform

in the system of civil government, and abolition of sinecure offices and pensions. Simplification and codification of civil and criminal law. State acquisition of railways, waterways, and tramways. National banking system, and the issue of State money only. Cumulative income tax, beginning at £300 per annum."

Thanks to the work of socialist and Labour organisations most of the foregoing demands may appear to-day to bear a commonplace character, while some of them have actually found their embodiment in legislation, having been imposed by the independent socialist and Labour movement on the Liberal Government. But a quarter of a century ago no Liberal would have given countenance to them; indeed, they were opposed by Liberal speakers and the Liberal press, and ridiculed either as leading to State slavery or to Utopia.

A manifesto was issued to the workers of Scotland explaining the objects of the new party, and the following extracts may give an idea of the lines upon which it was intended to proceed:—

"Hitherto the workers of Scotland have been kept divided in the political field, fighting against each other under the banners of Whig or Tory for party objects which, with the exception of such Acts as those already mentioned, have been of no real value to Labour. If any workman doubts this let him figure out how much his actual condition would be improved if the whole programme of the Liberals or of the Conservatives, or both together, were made law to-morrow. Some may argue that by and by the so-called "party of progress" will adopt Labour reforms as part of its policy, as it has adopted Home Rule for Ireland. Our reply is that when men die of hunger, as they are doing to-day, no delay can be permitted, and that if the workers of Scotland want Labour legislation they must, as the Irish have done, form themselves into a concrete political party, and give the other political parties no rest and peace until their demands are conceded.

"The first step to this end is the formation of a distinct, separate, and *Independent Labour Party*, which will rally at the

polls the forces of the workers and of those who sympathise with our efforts. . . .

" It has been by acting in this way that the Irish people have secured the almost undivided attention of Parliament, and have obtained relief from some of their greatest grievances. It is by acting in this way that we in Great Britain shall make Parliament alter the present condition of affairs, in which every twentieth inhabitant is a pauper, a million of men are out of work, one-fifth of the community is insufficiently clad, what are known as starvation diseases are rife amongst large classes, and in which one-third to one-half of the families of the country are huddled together six in a room. In the name of those who suffer from these evils we call on you to enrol yourselves in the Scottish Parliamentary Labour Party, and to assist it in carrying its programme at the next election in your division." [1]

The first independent Labour organisation of any size in England was The Labour Union in Bradford, which came into being as the result of an extensive local strike in the winter of 1890. The propaganda was carried on byBen Tillett, Robert Blatchford, and Joseph Burgess,who as writers or speakers exercised considerable influence in the North of England. Even London began to feel the effect of their work. At the general election of 1892 Keir Hardie was successful in South-West Ham, John Burns in Battersea, J. H. Wilson in Middlesbrough, all of whom had stood either as independent Labour or as socialist candidates, while Ben Tillett, the parliamentary candidate in Bradford, polled 2,749 votes against 3,306 obtained by the Liberal. The Fabian Society had published an *Election Manifesto*, in which the workmen were urged to quicken the pace of reform by the straightforward action of a genuine Working Class Party.[2]

The electoral campaign of 1892 made a deep impression on thoughtful politicians of the two great parties. Lord Randolph Churchill, writing to a friend, declared that the contests which Labour was now carrying on were significant and instructive. It had ireed itself to a great extent from the mere mechanism of party politics. Its struggle was no longer for wages, but for

[1] *Socialist Review*, April, 1914. [2] *Fabian Tract*, No. 40.

political power. Labour was now seeking to do for itself what the landed interests and the manufacturing capitalist interests did for themselves, when each in turn commanded the disposition of State policy. The land laws were framed by the landed interests, for their own advantage. Political power passed very considerably from the landed to manufacturing capitalist interests, and the fiscal system was shaped by this latter power to its own advantage, foreign politics also being made to coincide. The nation was coming fast to a time when Labour laws would be made by the Labour interests for the advantage of Labour, but it had to face strong and numerous forces—social, professional, and journalistic—and the many prejudices and resources which those forces could array against it.[1]

In the autumn of 1892 measures were taken to unite the various independent labour organisations into one party. On January 13 and 14, 1893, a conference was held in Bradford, which resulted in the formation of the Independent Labour Party (I.L.P.).

2.—FORMATION OF THE I.L.P.

About 120 delegates, under the chairmanship of Keir Hardie, assembled at Bradford. They included five from the Social Democratic Federation (S.D.F.) and twelve from the Fabian Society (F.S.), among them being G. B. Shaw, who, on their behalf, declared at the commencement of the proceedings that they regarded themselves but as guests, since their organisations were not inclined to join the new party. The deliberations of the conference with regard to the object of the formation of the party apparently showed a certain want of clearness. The great majority of the delegates, if not all of them, were convinced socialists, and yet they were engaged in forming a rival organisation to the S.D.F. Moreover, they were socialists and nevertheless declined to give their new organisation a socialist name. They felt, however, how the land lay.

The problem before the delegates was, in short, as follows.

[1] Joseph Burgess, *John Burns.*

In Great Britain there existed a social democratic organisation and a Liberal Labour organisation. The former had not succeeded in winning over the working class ; the latter had failed to pursue a Labour policy. What was the reason of these failures ? In the case of the S.D.F. the want of success was caused by the separation of the socialist aim from the Labour movement ; it spurned all compromise between theory and the actual mental condition of the working class ; it endeavoured to impose the truth instead of allowing the working classes to educate themselves through error to truth ; it failed to see that in order to convert the heathen and the sinners we must act like St. Paul and not like St. Peter ; the fiery apostle from Tarsus abandoned the laws of Moses and worshipped the spirit of Christ. The S.D.F., for all the emphasis it laid on the importance of class warfare, was not organised on class lines, but on the basis of theory—of socialist theory, on the acceptance of which depended the admission to its membership. The organised workman, who by means of his trade union was fighting against Capital, or the co-operative workman, who was assisting in organising distribution on collectivist lines, were not regarded as comrades by the members of the S.D.F., simply because those workmen lacked the capacity of thinking out where their activities led them to. In the case of the Labour Electoral Association the cause of failure was both intellectual and moral ; the Association sacrificed the political independence of Labour ; it simply failed to be Labour and formed but a branch of the Liberal Party. Therefore it was essential to found a party which should avoid both the over-righteousness of the one and the laxity of the other. Its main task appeared to consist in detaching the working classes from Liberalism and showing them that political Labour could not constitute a branch of Liberalism any more than trade unions could join the employers' associations. In fact, an independent Labour party was nothing else but the political counterpart to trade unionism.

It cannot be said that the delegates who had assembled at Bradford were fully conscious of the task they were undertaking. But there is no doubt that most of them were actuated by

sentiments of this nature, for after the discussions of the proposals concerning the name of the new party they rejected the name Socialist Labour Party, which was favoured by some, and adopted the name Independent Labour Party, because they felt that if they succeeded in detaching the trade unions from Liberalism the reform activities of Labour must inevitably move in the direction of socialism.

The conference then adopted a socialist programme. Its objects were the collective ownership and control of the means of production to be achieved through parliamentary action, social reform, protection of Labour and democracy in central and local government.

No difference could be detected between the programmes of the I.L.P. and the S.D.F., but marked divergencies existed between them in their attitude towards the trade unions and in the tone of their propaganda. From the very beginning the I.L.P. adopted a sympathetic attitude towards the trade unions and never swerved from it. At the second annual conference (1894) it was laid down as the duty of every member of the party to join a trade union, and, when Trade Union Congresses were sitting, to hold in the evenings socialist demonstrations and to bring the delegates along with them. The main argument of the I.L.P. consisted in showing the necessity for the trade unions to transfer their independent economic action to the political field, for it would be illogical to strike against Liberal employers and to vote for them at parliamentary elections, thus making them legislators and masters of the laws that govern strikes. The speakers of the I.L.P., in their educational work among the trade unionists, hardly ever referred to revolution and class-warfare, but started from the ethical, Nonconformist, and democratic sentiments which appeal most to British workmen. Nevertheless the old trade union leaders adopted a hostile attitude to the new party. They knew Keir Hardie and his friends, who had waged war against the Liberal Labour men at the Trade Union Congresses since 1887. Also the S.D.F. was for a long time against the I.L.P., and regarded it as an organised attempt at splitting and dispersing the socialist forces of Great Britain.

In 1894 the I.L.P. took part in three parliamentary by-elections and polled a total vote of 9,209. As a beginning the results were most promising. This relative success induced the I.L.P., only two years old, to make a large electoral experiment in 1895.

3.—PARLIAMENTARY AND MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

The Liberal Government of Gladstone and Rosebery, which had come into " power " as the result of the general election of 1892, was exploded by the cordite vote in June, 1895. In the few years of its precarious existence it democratised parish administration, established the death duties, and brought in a Home Rule Bill. Weakened by dissensions consequent upon the retirement of Gladstone, and attacked by friend and foe, it rapidly grew weary of the burden of office and seized the opportunity of the vote of censure against the Secretary for War, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and retired. Parliament was dissolved on July 8, 1895, and the election campaign commenced. The I.L.P., led by Hardie and Tom Mann, put up twenty-eight candidates—decidedly too many for a young and numerically small party. The campaign required a minimum expenditure of £9,000. At that time the membership of the I.L.P. stood at a little over 6,000. The financial burden was great, but it was shouldered. Much more difficult was it for the party to get sufficient speakers, organisers, agents, canvassers, and all those various helpers who are indispensable for success at British elections, the mechanism of which has been designed by the rich and for the rich. Every one of the twenty-eight I.L.P. candidates was unsuccessful ; the total vote they polled amounted to 44,320 ; even Hardie lost his seat in South-West Ham. The elections turned out badly for all the elements of progress ; the Liberals as well the Liberal Labour candidates suffered defeat after defeat. The Conservatives obtained a majority of 152 votes and took office. The work of the I.L.P. candidates was, however, not quite fruitless : it prepared the ground for the successes of 1906.

The members of the I.L.P., on finding that they were debarred from parliamentary honours, devoted their energies to municipal

government and trade union propaganda. Here they were able to achieve signal successes. In a short space of time about 800 members of the party were elected to the various local bodies ; in the municipal elections of November, 1897, 38 per cent. of the total votes cast were for the I.L.P. candidates in the districts where they were standing. The more active trade unionists came more and more into touch with the I.L.P., applying to its leaders for advice and information on political matters or electing them as secretaries of the unions. Harmonious relations were being gradually established between the economic and political wings of the Labour movement, although the old trade union leaders grew all the more determined in their hostility to the new party. The following instance may serve to show to what lengths this hostility could proceed: In 1897 a parliamentary vacancy occurred at Barnsley, a mining district in Yorkshire. Pete Curran, one of the organisers of the Gas Workers' and General Labourers' Union and one of the ablest leaders of the party, ran as the I.L.P. candidate. He was opposed by a Liberal employer and a Conservative captain. Ben Pickard, the general secretary and chief leader of the miners, worked day and night for the Liberal ; the whole press was on the side of the latter, whilst Curran was stoned by the miners and mobbed by their women and children, whistling and yelling and shouting him down. Nevertheless he polled 1,091 votes. Ten years' later, Curran was elected member of Parliament for Jarrow ; and in 1908 the Miners' Federation joined the Labour Party, and has since been growing more and more independent. A similar by-election was fought out in March, 1897, at Halifax, with Tom Mann, the secretary of the I.L.P., as the Labour candidate in opposition to both Liberals and Conservatives. Although the old trade union leaders, Broadhurst and Fenwick, spoke on behalf of the Liberals, Tom Mann obtained 2,000 votes. Events of this nature must be kept in view in order to arrive at a clear understanding of the history of the political Labour movement and of the enormous progress in the union and consolidation of the working class from the time of the formation of the Labour Party in 1900, with which we are now going to deal. As far as

personal forces shape history, the new developments must be ascribed mainly to the leading men of the I.L.P., though the work of the S.D.F. and the Fabians was, of course, of much assistance to them, as also was that of the writers of the *Clarion*, who at that time had not yet felt the mission of teaching the nation the principles of strategy, tactics, and Imperialist politics.

4.—THE "CLARION" AUXILIARIES OF THE I.L.P.

The editor of the *Clarion*, Robert Blatchford, had been instrumental in forming the nucleus of the I.L.P. at Bradford. Born and brought up in a working class family, he learnt the meaning of poverty and the indignities of wage-labour in the hard school of experience. He was, at first, a brushmaker, then a soldier, and finally turned to journalism, advocating democracy and land reform, but adversely criticising socialism. In 1890 he was converted to the new collectivist theories after having read a pamphlet written jointly by Hyndman and Morris. Blatchford, who in his self-taught way had been groping for a scheme of social reform, saw directly that the collectivist idea was the very thing he had been looking for, that it was at once juster, simpler, and more perfect than his own plan, and that it was very different from what he had thought socialism to be. He left the *Sunday Chronicle*, became an avowed socialist, and, with his friend, A. M. Thompson, founded the *Clarion* (1891), a weekly newspaper, in which socialism and independent Labour politics have found clear expression, easily grasped by intelligent working men who have no time or training to read the works of socialists and political economists. The *Clarion* writers are not strict party men; they are volunteers rather than members of the I.L.P., with the policy of which they are not necessarily in agreement, though they accept its main principles.

The numerous socialist pamphlets and books, published by Blatchford and his co-workers, have enjoyed a large circulation. The best representation of socialism, as taught by the *Clarion*, is *Britain for the British*, written by Blatchford in the years 1900-02, at the crucial time of the entrance of the trade unions into independent Labour politics. The author declares that at

present Britain did not belong to the British, but to a few of the British, who employed the bulk of the population as servants or as workers. It was because Britain did not belong to the British that a few were rich and the many were poor ; that the owning class lived in a state of useless luxury and pernicious idleness, and the working classes in a state of drudging toil, of wearing poverty and anxious care. This state of affairs was contrary to justice, reason, and Christianity. It was bad alike for the rich and for the poor ; it was against the best interests of the British nation and the human race. The only remedy for this evil was socialism, which simply meant Britain for all the British. After an exposition of the evils of the present social system, of the sources of the social evils or the causes from which they arose, of the true meaning of socialism, of the answers to the principal objections commonly raised against socialism, the author deals with the need for a Labour party. The chapter devoted to this subject forms the culminating point of the book. " My chief object in writing this book," Blatchford tells the British workman, " has been to persuade you that you need a Labour party." He argues from the point of view of the anti-socialist, who was constantly declaring that not altruism, but self-interest, was the strongest motive of mankind. For the sake of argument Blatchford agrees and goes on to say : " If self-interest be the leading motive of human nature, does it not follow that when a man wants a thing done for his advantage he will be wise to do it himself ? " Indeed, it had been so in political life. The upper classes used political power for their own interests ; the middle classes had done the same. If, therefore, the working class desired their interests to be attended to, they must take to heart the lesson contained in those examples and form a working class party. Neither the Tories nor the Liberals could do as much for Labour as Labour could do for itself. " Is not self-interest the ruling passion in the human heart ? Then how should any party be so true to Labour and so diligent in Labour's service as a Labour party would be ? " He then takes up the analogy between trade union and Labour party and says : " What is a trade union ? It is a combination of workers

to defend their own interests from the encroachments of the employers. Well, a Labour party is a combination of workers to defend their own interests from the encroachments of the employers or their representatives in Parliament and on municipal bodies. Do you elect your employers as officials of your trade unions? Do you send employers as delegates to your Trades Union Congress? You would laugh at the suggestion. You know that the employer could not attend to your interests in the trade union, which is formed as a defence against him. Do you think the employer is likely to be more useful or more disinterested in Parliament or the County Council than in the trade union? Whether he be in Parliament or in his own office, he is an employer, and he puts his own interest first and the interest of Labour behind. Yet these men, whom as trade unionists you mistrust, you actually send as politicians to make laws for you. A Labour party is a kind of political trade union, and to defend trade unionism is to defend Labour representation."

Blatchford, without ever having read a single line of Marx or studied the theory of class warfare, proceeds with his argument, which is a perfect application of those doctrines: "If an employer's interests are opposed to your interests in business, what reason have you for supposing that his interests and yours are not opposed in politics? If you oppose a man as an employer, why do you vote for him as a member of Parliament? His calling himself a Liberal or Tory does not alter the fact that he is an employer. To be a trade unionist and fight for your class during a strike, and to be a Tory or Liberal and fight against your class at an election, is folly. During a strike there are no Tories or Liberals amongst the strikers; they are all workers. At election times there are no workers, only Liberals and Tories. . . . We want Britain for the British. We want the fruits of labour for those who produce them. We want a human life for all. The issue is not between Liberals and Tories; it is an issue between the privileged classes and the workers." Socialism, rightly understood, was the logical conclusion of trade unionism. The latter was helping the workman to resist the

capitalist, the former desired to get rid of him altogether. Efficient defence implied attack, and for this purpose the workmen needed a strong and united Labour party that would fight for Labour in and out of Parliament, and would stand for Labour apart from the Liberals and the Tories. [1]

5.—KEIR HARDIE AND HIS COADJUTORS

The propaganda carried on by the I.L.P. was pervaded by the spirit of James Keir Hardie, who represented all that is best in the British working class. Socialism and Labour politics were not subjects for him to be reasoned and dogmatised upon. He had little tuition, but a great deal of intuition. A deeply religious, even mystical nature, although born of freethinking, rationalist parents, he had something in him of the primitive Christian, and he rebelled against the injustice flowing from the division of society into rich and poor, and the disintegration of mankind into hostile nations and warring States. Socialism and the brotherhood of man—these were his religious tenets, and to these he attached himself with all the spirituality that his rich Celtic nature was capable of. As a self-taught and self-centred man, he had his peculiarities and *bizarreries*, which earned for him the nickname "Queer Hardie" (a nickname given to him by Daniel De Leon), but they never interfered with the life work he had mapped out for himself. Undisturbed by success or failure, by taunts or eulogies, he was serenely wending his way, destroying Liberal-Labourism and giving the British working class an independent political existence.

Hardie was born on August 15, 1856, in Lanarkshire. His father was a shipwright. His mother taught him reading, and that was his whole tuition. At the age of nine years he had to earn wages as a mining boy and worked underground for some sixteen years, spending his leisure hours in reading and studying. Gradually he ascended the scale of offices which his trade union, the Ayrshire Miners' Association, offered him. Eased from hard bodily work, he could devote more time to study, and he read Carlyle, Ruskin, and Mill, became for a time a member of the

[1] Robert Blatchford, *Britain for the British*, chap. 17.

Evangelical Union, and was then caught by the land reform agitation of Henry George (1882–1884), as so many brave spirits were, who at that time attempted to revive socialism in Great Britain. But, while Hyndman and Webb and Morris were engaged in socialist propaganda, Hardie intuitively felt that the beginning must be made with throwing the Liberal rider off the trade union horse. His first national appearance in this *rôle* was at the Swansea Trade Union Congress (1887), when he assailed Henry Broadhurst, the secretary of the Parliamentary Committee and Labour lieutenant of Gladstone, for supporting capitalist candidates at elections. From that time onwards we see Hardie moving along his chosen path, swerving neither to the right nor to the left. We see him as an independent Labour candidate in Lanarkshire, then as independent Labour M.P. for South-West Ham, as founder of the I.L.P., and we shall see him in the following pages as the co-founder and first Parliamentary leader of the national Labour Party. The official organ of the I.L.P., the *Labour Leader*, is also his creation. Its parent was the *Miner*, a small monthly journal founded by him in 1887; its title was afterwards changed into the present one, and since 1893 it has been published as a weekly. Hardie owned and edited it himself till 1904, when it was transferred to the Party. It has been successively edited by J. Ramsay MacDonald, J. Bruce Glasier, J. T. Mills, Mrs. Bruce Glasier, and A. Fenner Brockway. So he worked on, for socialism and the brotherhood of nations, by pen and speech, guided by his inner light, until overwork and the war took him away from us on September 26, 1915.[1]

Among Hardie's friends, who were intimately connected with the rise of the I.L.P. and its ideas, Bruce Glasier deserves the first place. He was the best successor to Hardie as editor of the *Labour Leader*. He enjoyed a much better school training than his political leader, and he came to socialism not as a working man, but as an ethical and intellectual student; both of them belong, however, to the same spiritual cast, which is

[1] *Cf.* J. Bruce Glasier, *James Keir Hardie, A Memorial*, National Labour Press. Manchester and London, 1916.

religious and mystical. For, also, Glasier's socialism is not materialistic or political; it has for him the meaning of an ethical religion, a practical love and service of humanity, rather than any capture of political power and change of State administration. In his latest book, which is the final outcome of his life and experience as a socialist writer and speaker, he sums up his faith: "Historically, socialism is more closely related to religious than political propagandism. It is from the prophets, apostles, and saints, the religious mystics and heretics, rather than from statesmen, economists, and political reformers, that the socialist movement derives its example and ideals. . . . Socialism means not only the socialisation of wealth, not only the socialisation of the means of production and distribution, but of our lives, our hearts—ourselves. . . . Socialism, when finally resolved, consists not in getting at all, but in giving; not in being served, but in serving. . . . Its ultimate moral, as its original biological justification, lies in the principle, human and divine, that 'as we give, so we live,' and only in so far as we are willing to lose life do we gain life." [1]

Next to Glasier stands James Ramsay MacDonald, who from a Scottish pupil-teacher and London journalist has risen to the front rank of writers and leaders of the socialist movement. His favourite studies were biological. Spencer's works and Ritchie's *Darwinism and Politics* appear to have influenced him most; his experience was mainly political; his writings bear indelible traces of both. Although now well over fifty years of age his mind is still very active and open to new currents of thought. He joined the I.L.P. in 1895, where he received his Labour education, which enabled him to take over the duties of the secretaryship of the Labour Representation Committee (or Labour Party) at its foundation in 1900 and to carry them out with conspicuous ability. He contributed greatly to the growth of the Labour Party, and in giving his best to the movement he has been adding much to his own intellectual stature. He is a prolific writer. Among his many books and pamphlets his

[1] J. Bruce Glasier, *The Meaning of Socialism*, concluding chapter. National Labour Press. Manchester and London. 1919.

Socialism and Society (1905) and *Socialism and Government* (1911) contain his views on the practical problems of the socialist Labour movement. In regarding society as an organism analogous to the animal organism, he rejects class warfare and revolutionary action. "The watchword of socialism is not class consciousness, but community consciousness" (*Socialism and Society*, p. 144). The proper organ for accomplishing socialism was the democratic State, which meant the organised political personality of a sovereign people. The State was not the organ of a class, but of the whole society. Indeed, "socialism could not be defined better than as that stage of social organisation when the State organises for society an adequate nutritive system; and democratic government is the signal that the change is taking place" (*Socialism and Government*, i. 33). Socialism would come through Parliament or it would not come at all (*Syndicalism*, p. 8). Under socialism the State would reach a degree of organisation and importance in the community far greater than it could possibly attain under a *régime* of competition. The land and all the means of production would belong to the State. Still, there must be no confusion between the State and society. "The State is but one of the organs of the community, all of which together form the organism society" (*Socialism and Government*, i. 37). Of the other organs he only mentions the Church. Had he proceeded further and shown that also other organisations, for instance, trade unions, employers' federations, teachers' associations, and other bodies, were as much organs of society as the State was, he would have arrived at guild socialism. At any rate, it is quite evident that MacDonald is a social reformer, averse from all struggles, believing society to be moving by its inner development, as expressed and assisted by the human mind, from lower to higher stages of organisation, more and more in accordance with the interests of the whole community. He, therefore, is of opinion that no well-defined socialist party, no dogmatic programme, is needed and that it is quite sufficient to have a broad socialistic movement which would consider all public questions from the point of view of socialism as that stage to

which we are approaching (*Socialism and Government*, ii., 12–13). With these views as his guide, MacDonald was the best possible secretary of the Labour Party in the first years of its existence. The trade unions, which had to be gradually weaned from Liberalism, were essentially of the same opinion, though they could not have expressed it in biological terms. All they wanted was social reform and democracy. They could not have stood yet a clear-cut socialist programme, based on the theory of class warfare or on any other doctrinal substructure.

Hardie was also very proud of his comradeship with Philip Snowden, who has proved the best socialist Budget speaker and financial writer. Robert Smillie, now President of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, was a life-long friend and co-worker of Hardie. The same may be said of Frank Smith.

Among the earliest members of the I.L.P. and friends of Hardie were Fred Jowett (who had risen from a simple factory hand to one of the best Labour journalists), J. R. Clynes, George N. Barnes, and G. H. Roberts. Indeed, several of the labour leaders who in the last years of the war occupied Ministerial positions had served their political apprenticeship in the I.L.P.

XVI

FORMATION OF THE LABOUR PARTY

I.—ABORTIVE STRIKES AND THE SUBVERSION OF TRADE UNION LAW

It is a matter of doubt whether the founders of the I.L.P. were satisfied with the results of the first years of their work. After all, the new party proved to be merely an improved edition of the S.D.F. The main object, namely, to enlist the masses of the organised workers to the cause of independent politics, was not attained. The progress made by the I.L.P. in the ranks of the more alert trade unionists was, indeed, encouraging, but the masses failed to respond to the new propaganda. This was clearly demonstrated during the parliamentary elections and by-elections in the years from 1895 to 1898. The polling results were but moral victories and as such could make no impression on the masses. The leaders of the I.L.P. had therefore to search for other methods, or to watch for opportunities which would assist them in their efforts. And they had not long to search and wait for them. Events were shaping themselves in the trade union world which could not fail to promote the objects of the I.L.P. In 1897 and 1898 the engineers and the Welsh miners came out on strike for better conditions of labour, and after a stubborn fight lasting for many months were discomfited. In 1898 Gladstone died, and with him one of the main pillars of Liberal Labourism disappeared from British politics. Simultaneously the Trade Union Acts, 1871, 1875, 1876, which were regarded by Labour as its charter of liberty, were being shattered. By decisions of the law courts the right of picketing was gradually curtailed and the freedom from collective responsibility nullified. The process of shattering trade union law began in 1896, but failed to attract much attention at the time owing to the insigni-

ficant nature of the actions. The Taff Vale decision (1900–1) was but the sensational revelation of an accomplished fact. At the beginning of the twentieth century the organised working men, the pick of British Labour, became conscious of the fact that the strike was a blunt and clumsy weapon and that even this weapon was no longer available. At the same time the controversies on the South African War threatened the existence of the Liberal party, which the bulk of the trade unionists regarded as their political representative. The accepted methods of economic and political action, by which the trade unions had set so much store, proved a bundle of dry and broken faggots fit only for the fire. The Liberal Labour period was manifestly nearing its end.

This was the state of affairs at the ringing out of the old and the ringing in of the new century.

2.—THE TRADE UNION CONGRESS OF 1899

In the summer of 1899 the trade unions made preparations for their annual congress, which was to be held at Plymouth during the first week in September. The leaders of the I.L.P., unless they were wage-workers or paid trade union officials, were not allowed to be elected as delegates to the Congress, since a resolution to this effect had, at the instance of John Burns, been adopted by the Trades Union Congress of 1895, in order to free the delegates from the influence of "socialist adventurers." The leaders of the I.L.P. had therefore to look for indirect methods to make their voices heard in the Labour parliaments. In the office of the *Labour Leader*, the organ of the I.L.P., a resolution was drafted for the purpose of promoting Labour representation and handed over, through the executive of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, to James Holmes, the organiser of the Taff Vale strike and one of the delegates to the Trade Union Congress. The resolution ran as follows:—

"This Congress having regard to the decisions of former years, and with a view to securing a better representation of the interests of Labour in the House of Commons, hereby instructs the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress to invite the co-operation of all the Co-operative, Socialist, Trade Union,

and other working class organisations jointly to co-operate on lines mutually agreed upon in convening a special congress of representatives from such of the above-mentioned organisations as may be willing to take part to devise ways and means for the securing of an increased number of Labour members to the next Parliament."

Holmes moved the resolution, and he was followed by James Sexton, a clever and eloquent Irishman, the delegate of the Liverpool dockers, who seconded it. The old trade union leaders opposed the resolution. Their spokesman, Thomas Ashton, the secretary of the spinners in Oldham, was of opinion that it was sheer waste of time to have long debates on this resolution; not one trade unionist in 10,000 would give it a moment's attention; trade unionism would altogether come to grief if it were to be turned into a political party. Nevertheless the resolution was discussed and passed by 546,000 votes to 434,000. It laid the foundation-stone of the Labour Party.

The mere adoption of the resolution by the Congress at Plymouth naturally did not accomplish much. It would have led to just as little result as earlier resolutions, or as the Labour Representation League and the Labour Electoral Association. It was therefore necessary above everything to withdraw the practical application of the resolution from the Trade Union Congress and its traditionally Liberal organ, the Parliamentary Committee, and to place it in the hands of the I.L.P. This was a relatively easy matter, for the Parliamentary Committee had no belief in the success of the resolution. A committee was appointed for this purpose, consisting of four members of the Parliamentary Committee: Sam Woods (Liberal), W. C. Steadman (Radical and Fabian), William Thorne (Social Democrat) and R. Bell (at that time with socialist learnings), further, of two members each from the I.L.P., S.D.F., and the Fabian Society—Keir Hardie, J. Ramsay MacDonald, Harry Quelch, H. R. Taylor, G. B. Shaw and E. R. Pease (secretary of the Fabians). The socialists were in the majority on the committee and they were far superior to the trade unionist members in intelligence, energy, and know-

ledge of their aims. The committee held several meetings and decided to convene a general conference. As a basis for the deliberations of the conference they drew up the following eight resolutions and rulings :—

1. *Object of Conference :* A resolution in favour of working class opinion being represented in the House of Commons by men sympathetic with the aims and demands of the Labour movement.

2. *Labour Members in the House of Commons :* A resolution in favour of establishing a distinct Labour group in Parliament, who should have their own Whips and agree upon their policy, which must embrace a readiness to co-operate with any party which, for the time being, may be engaged in promoting legislation in the direct interest of labour, and be equally ready to associate themselves with any party in opposing measures having an opposite tendency.

3. *Constitution of Committee :* The committee shall consist of twelve representatives from trade unions, ten from the co-operative societies, provided they are represented as a body at the conference, two from the Fabian Society, two from the I.L.P., and two from the S.D.F.

4. *Duty of Committee :* This committee should keep in touch with trade unions and other organisations which are running Labour candidates.

5. *Financial responsibility :* The committee shall adminster the funds which may be received on behalf of the organisation, and each body shall be required to pay 10s. per annum for every 1000 members or fraction thereof, also that it shall be responsible for the expenses of its own candidates.

6. *Reporting to Congress :* It should also report annually to the Trades Union Congress and the annual meetings of the national societies represented on the committee, and take any steps deemed advisable to elicit opinion from the members of the organisations to which the committee is ultimately responsible.

7. *Basis of Representation :* Societies, by whatever name they may be known, shall be entitled to one delegate for every 2,000 members or fraction thereof, and they must pay 10s. for each delegate attending the conference, and forward their names and

addresses seven days prior to the date fixed for the meeting. No credential card shall be issued to any society not having complied with the foregoing conditions.

8. *Voting:* The method of voting shall be by card, to be issued to the delegates of trade societies according to their membership, and paid for on the principle of one card for every 1000 members or fractional part thereof represented.

All the organisations in question were invited by the committee to send delegates to the general conference. With the exception of the co-operative societies many organisations accepted the invitation, and the committee made the necessary preparations for the conference.

3.—THE LABOUR REPRESENTATION COMMITTEE

On February 27 and 28, 1900, exactly sixty-three years after the meeting of the London Working Men's Union at which the People's Charter was formulated, 120 delegates met in London, representing more than half a million working men belonging to trade unionist and socialist organisations, for the purpose of inaugurating a new Chartist movement. The chair was taken on this occasion also by a London working man—W. C. Steadman, who had already represented a London constituency in the House of Commons. John Burns, member of Parliament for Battersea, was likewise present, but not much attention was paid to him.

Steadman opened the conference and stated:—

"I am one of those trade unionists who believed, until the last ten years, that the workers of this country could attain their object in securing better conditions by voluntary efforts through their trade organisations. But the dispute which occurred in my own trade ten years ago for a reduction of the hours of labour had convinced me that the leaders of the advanced movement who believed in political action were right and I was wrong. I give way to no man in my desire to see Labour better represented in the House of Commons than it was to-day."

The conference then proceeded to deliberate upon the resolutions drawn up by the committee. The debate that ensued

disclosed three main lines of thought. The first desired to include among the working class candidatures all those " who are sympathetic with the aims and demands of the Labour movement " ; the second that the labour candidates should be restricted to those belonging to the organisations represented on the committee ; the third that they should be restricted to social democrats who advocated class warfare and the collective ownership of the means of production. The first aimed at a rapprochement between the committee and the Radicals ; the second desired a strict Labour policy ; the third was in favour of the identification of the committee with the Social Democratic Federation. John Burns supported the first view and expressed the opinion :—

" I am getting tired of working class boots, working class trains, working class houses, and working class margarine. I believe the time has arrived in the history of the Labour and social movement when we should not be prisoners to class prejudice but should consider parties and policies apart from all class organisations."

The advocates of the second trend of thought were George Barnes, Pete Curran, James Sexton, and Keir Hardie, who for the most part aimed at an independent Labour party and a harmonious co-operation between trade unionists and socialists. Harry Quelch and James Macdonald supported the third line of policy.

The views of the second current of opinion corresponded on the whole to the feelings and wishes of the conference, and they were adopted by large majorities. The conference elected a Labour Representation Committee (L.R.C.), consisting of seven trade unionists, two members of the I.L.P., two members of the S.D.F., and one of the Fabian Society. James Ramsay MacDonald, a member of the I.L.P., was elected secretary, and immediately set to work to enlist the sympathies of the trade unions for the L.R.C. Yet in 1900 only 375,931 trade unionists and socialists affiliated, among them being 13,000 members of the I.L.P., 9,000 of the S.D.F., and 861 of the Fabian Society.

The admission to the membership of the L.R.C.[1] was, at that time, not open to individuals, but to Labour and socialist organisations ; the unit of membership was not the individual, but the trade union or socialist society. As a rule it was effected in the following manner :—Some of the members of a union or a trades council or a socialist group proposed that the organisation should join the Labour Party. A general vote was taken and the decision lay with the majority. The case, therefore, easily arose that powerful minorities of trade unionists who were either Liberals or Conservatives and therefore not in agreement with the essentials of the Labour Party were nevertheless reckoned as its members. The method, which is in use for purely trade unionist purposes, was made applicable to politics. In exclusively trade unionist questions, for instance, in strikes, a decision is rarely unanimous, and yet the decision to quit work has to be obeyed by all ; the minority has to subordinate its wishes to those of the majority. In the same manner, a decision to vote Labour against Liberals and Conservatives was to be binding on all. The difficulty, however, was that, whilst a strike forms an integral part of trade unionist action, the political vote was for a long time a matter of party. The conversion of trade unions to a national Labour Party in opposition to all other parties was bound to give rise to difficulties. In the course of our narrative we shall see what were the problems and conflicts which resulted from the new phase of the British Labour movement. But in the first few years they were scarcely noticeable, and the L.R.C. was able to obtain a surprising measure of success without being involved in internecine struggles.

4.—GROWTH OF THE L.R.C.

In September, 1900, Parliament was dissolved and in October the general election took place. The L.R.C., though young and hardly prepared for an election campaign, sent fifteen candidates into the field, of whom two only were successful—Richard Bell

[1] From 1906 onwards the L.R.C. assumed the name of Labour Party, but the latter term was also used, though not officially, from the time it was formed.

in Derby and Keir Hardie in Merthyr Tydvil. In the fifteen constituencies 177,000 votes were cast for all parties, 62,700 of which were given to Labour candidates. In 1901 the number of trade unions affiliated to the L.R.C. amounted to sixty-five, while that of the socialist organisations fell to two, the S.D.F. having withdrawn in the summer of the same year from the L.R.C. The total membership stood at that time at 455,450. In 1902 the membership was doubled—it rose to 861,200. The meaning of the Taff Vale decision was beginning to be thoroughly understood by the organised masses; political action became the leading question, for the trade unionists saw that new legislation was necessary in order to remove the paralysis which had overtaken their organisations in consequence of the Taff Vale decision. In June, 1902, a parliamentary vacancy occurred at Clitheroe. The I.L.P. was prepared to put up Philip Snowden as the socialist candidate, but gave way to David J. Shackleton, the secretary of the textile workers, who came forward as an independent Labour candidate and was returned unopposed. In 1903 the Labour group in Parliament was increased by two more members—William Crooks and Arthur Henderson. Crooks was elected in Woolwich, having polled 8,687 votes against 5,458 cast for the Conservative, while Henderson carried Barnard Castle against both Liberals and Conservatives. In 1904 the Labour group in Parliament was joined by Thomas Richards, member for West Monmouthshire, who defeated his tariff reform opponent. Meanwhile, the Taff Vale decision imposed heavy burdens on some of the trade unions. In 1903 the Railway Servants paid to the Taff Vale Company damages and costs to the amount of £23,000, and judgment was delivered against the South Wales miners, who were mulcted in £50,000. It may incidentally be remarked that only in Wales did the employers have recourse to the Taff Vale decision, while English and Scottish employers suffered the grave inconveniences which industrial conflicts imply rather than aggravate the tension between Capital and Labour by onslaughts on the trade union funds. This may, to some degree, explain the syndicalist and revolutionary tendencies among the Labour organisations in South

Wales. To the end of 1905 the Labour group in Parliament consisted of four members, Richard Bell having returned to the Liberal camp. Indeed, Bell had never felt quite at home as secretary of his union, or as member of the I.L.P. and the L.R.C. When paying the above-mentioned damages and costs to the Taff Vale directors at a special dinner which he arranged for them, he ate humble pie by delivering a very contrite speech and winding it up by expressing his best wishes for them. In the same year (1903) a bye-election took place at Norwich, with George H. Roberts as I.L.P. candidate. Roberts was then a fiery socialist and internationalist. Many of the Labour leaders, notably David J. Shackleton and Arthur Henderson, fresh from the field of glory, supported him, while Richard Bell sent his best wishes to the Liberal candidate and urged the electors to vote " yellow." The disloyal action of Bell created a ferment in the movement and led finally to the great discussion on the question of independence, which, as we shall see in one of the next chapters, was subsequently settled at the Newcastle L.R.C. conference in the same year.

During all those years the Conservative Government made no serious attempt to amend trade union law or to arrive at any compromise with the working men. Their whole attention was concentrated on the tariff reform movement, which Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary, set on foot in May, 1903, and which resulted in a crisis in the Conservative Party. The L.R.C. received scant notice from the press and the public, though the election of William Crooks caused the *Daily Telegraph* to remark that a new Chartist movement was in the course of formation. This shrewd remark was not followed up. Tariff reform and the growing tension of Anglo-German relations soon diverted the thoughts of politicians and publicists from Labour problems. No wonder, then, that the results of the elections in January, 1906, struck them as a bolt from the blue.

In December, 1905, the Conservative Government resigned and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, who had led his party from defeat to victory, formed a Liberal Cabinet, in which John Burns was appointed President of the Local Government Board.

The general election took place in January, 1906. The L.R.C., scarcely six years old, had a membership of 900,000, and sent fifty candidates into the electoral campaign, twenty-nine of whom were successful. The total vote cast for all the parties in the fifty constituencies amounted to 860,000, of which 323,200 were given to Labour. The Miners' Federation, represented in Parliament by fourteen members of their own, was the only one of the larger trade unions which remained outside the L.R.C. At that time the representatives of the miners belonged to the Liberal Party.

The Labour successes formed the sensation of the year. Newspapers and clubs, drawing-rooms and country houses, forgetting for a time the crushing defeat of Toryism and tariff reform, discussed hardly anything else but the political uprise of the working classes. The spirit of the nation was stirred to its depths, and the remarkable thing was that the speakers and writers occupied themselves less with Labour than with socialism, although the L.R.C. was not socialist. A whole literature dealing with the history and essence of socialism came into existence with lightning rapidity ; the socialist weeklies, *Justice*, *Labour Leader*, *Clarion*, *Forward*, etc., gained a large circulation ; everybody seemed to be anxious to get some knowledge of the new power which had so unexpectedly made its appearance. The nation grasped somehow the truth that an independent Labour Party meant a reorganisation of society on socialist lines.

The L.R.C., henceforth officially known as the Labour Party (L.P.), held its sixth annual conference in the middle of February, 1906, in London. Its deliberations were exceedingly cordial. Socialists, like Keir Hardie and Pete Curran, trade union leaders, like Shackleton and Henderson, regarded each other as comrades in a spirit of candour and cheerfulness. The conference celebrated the reconciliation of Labour and Socialism. The scenes of enthusiasm occurring during the conference and the declarations of solidarity of all the Labour forces vividly recalled the best moments of Chartism. The mass demonstration which was held at the Queen's Hall on the evening of February 16,

1906, in honour of the conference delegates, left an indelible impression on all who took part in it. At last the effects of the past defeats of Labour seemed to have vanished for ever!

The first-fruits of the victory of the Labour Party was the reversal of the Taff Vale decision. The Party imposed upon the Campbell-Bannerman Cabinet a Trade Disputes Bill, which secured to the organised workers the right of picketing and freedom from collective responsibility. In the House of Lords a current of opinion was manifested in opposition to the Bill, the great majority of the peers sharing the opinion of many lawyers and judges that this measure raised the trade unions to a privileged position before the law of the land. But Lord Lansdowne, appreciating the revolutionary effect of the Taff Vale decision on the working classes, considered that the Trade Disputes Bill was not a favourable battleground for the Conservatives, and therefore advised them to execute a strategic retreat. The Bill was passed.

The signal victory of the small Labour group over the strongest Liberal Government and the House of Lords, as well as over capitalists and lawyers, raised the hopes of the working classes and the socialists to a higher degree than ever before. Altogether the year 1906 was one of the most remarkable in the annals of British democracy and Labour. There was nothing like it since 1831-2; moreover, as far as Labour was concerned, the counter-currents and disappointments were somewhat longer in coming than in 1832. In July, 1907, two sensational by-elections took place. At Jarrow, Pete Curran, the socialist and Labour candidate, carried the constituency in a four-cornered or "square" fight; in the Colne Valley, Victor Grayson, a young, inexperienced socialist, curiously recalling the type of the young Chartist agitators of 1840, was successful on a purely socialist programme. On the other hand, the parliamentary session of 1907 proved barren of social legislation, and gave rise to much dissatisfaction among the working classes. Disillusionment was gradually setting in, and it was intensified by the defeat of the Society of Railway Servants. After long and laborious preparations the railwaymen were determined to give

battle for better condition of labour, and particularly for the recognition of their union by the Railway Companies. In the autumn of 1907 the prospect of a disastrous struggle thoroughly alarmed the public, and the Government was urged to interfere. Lloyd George, then President of the Board of Trade, appeared on the scene, and finally succeeded in forcing upon the men's leaders a scheme of conciliation and arbitration boards. On November 6 the conflict was declared to have come to an end. In reality, it was merely postponed, for the railwaymen regarded the result as a defeat, and many of them even thought it to have been the result of a betrayal of the men by their leaders. The railway men were " welshed," as the editor of the *Justice* remarked.[1]

The reaction from parliamentarism and conciliatory industrial methods gradually manifested itself in rebellions of the trade unionists against their leaders, and, finally, in revolutionary trade unionism or anti-parliamentary syndicalism, which will be dealt with in a later chapter. Meanwhile we must turn our attention to the problems of independent politics and organisation which troubled the Labour Party.

[1] Compare G. D. H. Cole and R. Page Arnot, *Trade Unionism on the Railways*, 1917. pp. 21, 110-113.

XVII

PROBLEMS OF THE LABOUR PARTY

I.—LABOUR POLITICS AND SOCIALISM

In the latter half of the nineteenth century the organised workers were overwhelmingly Liberal, though as trade unionists they were nominally neutral. They supported, from their funds, parliamentary representatives, as a rule Liberal Labour members; and they defrayed the expenses of the Trade Union Congress, which has always had a good deal to do with politics. In fact, the political neutrality of the trade unions was the result of the absence of any strong and definite opposition to Liberalism, the Conservative minorities of the trade unions forming a negligible quantity. With the exception of one or two Conservative trade union leaders, the officials of the Labour organisations belonged to the Liberal Party.

With the affiliation of an increasing number of trade unions to the L.R.C. or Labour Party, an examination into the principles on which political parties are based became inevitable. For, if the L.R.C. was Liberal, there was no need for it. Seeing, however, that it existed and flourished, it must needs have adopted principles different from those of Liberalism. What were they? These examinations, questions and discussions were taken in hand as soon as the L.R.C. came into being. They were carried on mainly by the members of the I.L.P. and the S.D.F.

The members of the S.D.F. advocated the prompt and immediate transformation of the L.R.C. into a social democratic party, and attempted to force upon it the recognition of the ultimate aim of socialism, with its method of class warfare. Even if this resulted in a split, nothing would be lost. What could a Labour Party accomplish without an ultimate aim?

Nothing. On the other hand, much could be accomplished by a small social democratic party possessing a definite programme. At the conference, at which the L.R.C. was formed (1900), James Macdonald, the delegate of the S.D.F., moved :—

" That the representatives of the working class movement in the House of Commons shall form there a distinct party . . . based upon a recognition of the class war, and having for its ultimate object the socialisation of the means of production, distribution, and exchange. The party shall formulate its own policy for promoting practical legislative measures in the interests of labour, and shall be prepared to co-operate with any party that will support such measures, or will assist in opposing measures of an opposite character."

A similar resolution was submitted a year later (1901) by Harry Quelch, editor of *Justice*. All the delegates of the trade unions and the I.L.P. spoke against binding the L.R.C. candidates to socialism. On the other hand, the conference adopted the resolution moved by Keir Hardie :—

" That this conference is in favour of establishing a distinct Labour Group in Parliament, who shall have their own Whips, and agree upon their policy, which must embrace a readiness to co-operate with any party which for the time being may be engaged in promoting legislation in the direct interest of labour, and be equally ready to associate themselves with any party in opposing measures having an opposite tendency."

This resolution outlined the policy of the party in Parliament. It aimed at the formation in the House of Commons of a Labour Party having its own policy, its own Whips, and acting in all that concerned the welfare of the workers in a manner free and unhampered by entanglements with other parties. Each of the affiliated organisations would be left free to select its own candidates without let or hindrance, the one condition being that, when returned to Parliament, the candidate should agree to form one of the Labour Group there, and act in harmony with its decisions. In this way they would avoid the scandal, which in the past had pained earnest men on both sides, of seeing trade unionists opposing socialists, and *vice versa*.

As to the economic principles of the new party, the conference adopted the resolution which James Sexton, the delegate of the Liverpool dock labourers, moved on behalf of his union :—

" That this conference declares that in view of the combinations of capital and the federations of employers it is necessary for the trade unions of the country to use their political power to defend their existence and secure their demands, and while it deprecates the introduction of mere party politics into the trade union movement, it urges upon trade unionists the necessity of combining on an independent platform for the following purposes : (1) The defence of the legal rights of combination. (2) The passing of such laws as will put an end to a system under which the producer of wealth has to bear an enormous burden in the shape of rents and profits which go to maintain large classes of non-producers."

The resolutions of Keir Hardie and James Sexton respectively contain essentially the same demands and principles as the resolutions of James Macdonald and Harry Quelch, but the former are free from dogmatic formulæ and were therefore more acceptable to the trade union delegates. Nevertheless, the S.D.F., at its annual conference in 1901, decided to withdraw from the L.R.C. A resolution to that effect was adopted by fifty-four to fourteen votes. The withdrawal of the S.D.F. delegation from the L.R.C. had two unfavourable effects. In the first place it gave rise to hostile recriminations between the organs of the S.D.F. and the I.L.P., and widened the gulf between the two socialist bodies whose co-operation was necessary for the success of socialism in Great Britian. Secondly, the two vacant places on the L.R.C. were filled by Liberal Labour trade unionists. The socialist influence was weakened and frittered away at a moment when the affiliation of trade unions to the L.R.C. was proceeding at a great rate—in 1902–3 the membership rose from 455,450 to 847,315. The new movement was filled with masses of recruits who needed training in independent Labour politics and social reform, while the S.D.F. members who could have undertaken that training made strenuous efforts not to let their doctrines pass into the hands of the heathen. The relatively small number of

socialists on the L.R.C. were faced with the task of protecting the new organisation from being swamped with Liberal Labourism. We shall see presently how they attempted to solve the problem. In the meantime we may observe that, although the S.D.F. as a body was no longer in a position to send delegates to the conferences in an official capacity, several of its members attended them annually as delegate of trade unions affiliated to the L.R.C. Their exertions, however, suffered from the suspicion that they were attempting to smuggle in the ideas of an organisation which was not in sympathy with the L.R.C. They moved social democratic resolutions at the annual conferences of the L.R.C., which, when taken *seriatim*, were rejected, as the annual conferences were not inclined to pledge their parliamentary representatives to socialism. On the other hand, the social democratic resolutions were adopted, when they were meant merely as an invitation to socialists to act in concert with the British Labour movement. Both cases occurred at the eighth annual conference (1908), held at Hull. On the discussion of the amendments to the constitution of the Labour Party, William Atkinson, the delegate of the paper stainers and a member of the S.D.F., moved that it was the aim of the Labour Party—

"To organise and maintain a Parliamentary Party, with its own Whips, whose ultimate object shall be the obtaining for the workers the full results of their labour by the overthrow of the present competitive system of capitalism and the institution of a system of public ownership and control of all the means of life."

In support of this amendment he declared that no Labour Party worth the name ought to be satisfied with a mere wage system. It was no use to hide the fact that most of them were already persuaded that the socialist position was the right position.

He thought that if the Labour Party desired to maintain an onward march, and make that march quickly, it was more likely to accomplish it by declaring to landlords and capitalists that it was not afraid of its convictions and that it intended to realise them at an early date.

Atkinson was supported by R. Davis, delegate of the society of

ironfounders, then by V. Grayson, at that time member of Parliament, finally by Harry Quelch, the social democratic leader, who attended the conference as a delegate of the London Trades Council, and by J. Gribble (Boot and Shoe Operatives' Union). The amendment was opposed by J. Bruce Glasier, delegate of the I.L.P., who wished to draw the attention of the conference to the important fact that the resolution did not simply consist in a declaration in favour of socialism, but it actually meant that if it was passed every trade unionist would be excluded from the party if he was not prepared to declare in favour of socialism. On behalf of the I.L.P. he declared that it had no wish to impose socialism on those who were not prepared to accept it ; he and his fellow delegates from the I.L.P. wished to say that they rejoiced to work with the trade unionists, as owing to that alliance the Labour Party had been so successful in Parliament. Glasier was followed by J. R. Clynes, M.P. (Oldham Trades Council), one of the most persuasive speakers of Labour, who declared that he believed in the public ownership and control of all the material things needed for the maintenance of life. But so far as they took part in politics they ought to be careful not to sharpen the weapons of the enemy. He believed that if they forced this declaration of objects upon the organised million represented in the party the effect would be harmful. The party subsisted at present on an alliance. The conditions of the alliance ought to be respected. The success of the alliance ought not to be ignored. He was more in favour of preaching to make converts to socialism in the country than of seeking in the conference to fasten the socialist label upon the large mass of organised workers who were not socialists at all. They were not out, as a matter of fact, for ultimate objects ; they were out for Old Age pensions ; they were out for immediate industrial legislation ; they were out for some kind of effective and helpful legislation on the subject of unemployment ; and at the same time they were out in the country preaching ideals to the people.

A. H. Gill, M.P., said that as one of the old type of trade unionists he wished to oppose the amendment. It was because he was anxious to maintain the alliance as it at present existed that

he opposed the amendment. They wanted to get something done at the present time and they could not afford to wait to realise the whole of the programme that the extreme men or advanced men were going in for. Trade unionists were not all socialists yet, and until they became all socialists they would not be prepared to pay their levies for the purpose of supporting a socialist party. There was no difficulty at the present time in the House of Commons in the two wings of the party working together. He thought for the next twenty years those two sections could work hand in hand and they could have useful work done. If it had not been for the alliance between the trade unionists and the Socialists in the House of Commons they would not have had a Trades Disputes Act passed ; they would not have had the Compensation Act passed in the way it was. Instead of trying to find points of difference the policy should be to find points of agreement, and there were many points about which they were all agreed, although some were not prepared to go the whole hog. He ventured to say that if the amendment were carried the trade unions would be forced out of the party and thus wreck it.

Pete Curran, M.P. (gasworkers), said that nine years ago the socialist trade unionist and what might be called the old-timer trade unionist joined hands in an open and honourable alliance, in accordance with the resolution passed at the Plymouth Trade Union Congress. They joined hands for political purposes on strictly independent lines, and at that time the S.D.F. came in. But then the younger and more turbulent spirits, the men who did all the shouting and little work, forced the Federation out of the alliance, and now members of the Federation attended the Labour Party conferences representing other organisations. It was grieving to those who left the party to find that it was successful even in their absence. In the House of Commons Mr. Gill and the other men who represented the more moderate side of the trade union movement on all questions since he had been there had been as loyal and as independent as any socialist could be. The carrying of the amendment would do more to help the London *Daily Express* and *Daily Mail* in disrupting the movement than anything else that could be done. They had

the trade unionists to-day working under conditions that they refused to work under twelve, thirteen, and fourteen years ago. They were willing to admit that at that time they did not see the wisdom of independent political action, and what had brought them to see it was the force of circumstances, legal tyranny, and the educational propaganda of the socialists in the trade union movement. They wanted to work with them openly and honourably, and he believed that with the process of evolution they would come right along as far as desired, but they should not be driven nor forced.

The amendment was then put up and the vote was as follows :— for the amendment 91,000, against 951,000.

The same conference, however, carried, two days later, a socialist resolution, because it was understood that it was proposed for the purpose of eliciting an expression of opinion. J. J. Stephenson (Engineers) moved :—

"That in the opinion of this Conference the time has arrived when the Labour Party should have as a definite object the socialisation of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, to be controlled by a democratic State in the interest of the entire community ; and the complete emancipation of Labour from the domination of capitalism and landlordism, with the establishment of social and economic equality between the sexes."

He said he was going to attempt to speak to this resolution from the experience of a trade unionist. The organisation responsible for the motion came into existence fifty-six years ago to protect the interests of those under its jurisdiction. But had their aspirations been realised ? We had unemployed to-day in the engineering community and we had a standard of living far short of that which our forefathers desired. He wanted to say that it was not the purpose of the Engineers' Society to drive away any members in the coalition which formed the party. When they had carried our remedial legislation as far as it was possible they would still be confronted by inequalities that could only be removed by the commonwealth having charge of all the forces of the commonwealth and owning them. Consider the

scenes that were presented in the large cities: Piccadilly in London at midnight, the East End at midday, the unemployed at Tower Hill and on the Embankment; in Hull, Carr Lane from six in the evening, and the dock gates from six in the morning. To what were these spectacles due but to the private ownership of the means of life? Take another illustration with which they are familiar. The latest triumphs of shipbuilding and engineering were the "Lusitania" and the "Mauretania." Go down for an hour into the stokeholds and see how men earned their bread. Here was the distribution of wealth exemplified. For every penny the coal-trimmers get as wages for their hard work, the landlord receives 35s. royalty rent on the coal. Landlords and employers when they had control of the Legislature passed the laws in their own behalf. The founders of his organisation fifty-six years ago put the memorable words in the preface of the Rule Book that they hoped the interests of the workers would be promoted by their trade unions until some more general principle of co-operation should be acknowledged in society, guaranteeing to every man the full enjoyment of his labour. He was one of those who believed that they must have an ideal in their politics; that ideal being in this case the absolute removal from their midst of all that makes crime and vice rampant.

Only two delegates took part in the discussion, one speaking for, the other against the resolution, which was then put and carried by 514,000 votes to 469,000.

The results of the discussions of socialist resolutions at the Hull conference were unmistakable. The Labour Party stood for social reform—for a socialistic reorganisation of society by gradual steps, but it was not social revolutionary; it had no final goal, but immediate aims; it did not occupy itself with theories, but with practical measures.

2.—LABOUR'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

The growth of the L.R.C. in 1902-3, the swamping of the organisation with Liberal Labour men, and the attempt on the part of some Labour leaders, like Richard Bell, John Ward, and

the old trade union officials to beat a hasty retreat to the Liberal camp, induced the I.L.P. members of the L.R.C. to define, in unambiguous terms, the conception of Labour independence, and to cause the L.R.C. to embody it in an authoritative declaration. At the third annual conference (Newcastle, 1903) Pete Curran, in accordance with the recommendation of the Standing Orders Committee, moved the following resolution :—

"In view of the fact that the L.R.C. is recruiting adherents from all outside political forces, and also, taking into consideration the basis upon which the committee was inaugurated, this conference regards it as being absolutely necessary that the members of the Executive Committee and officials of affiliated organisations should strictly abstain from identifying themselves with, or promoting the interests of, any section of the Liberal or Conservative parties, inasmuch as if we are to secure the social and economic requirements of the industrial classes Labour representatives in and out of Parliament will have to shape their own policy and act upon it regardless of other sections in the political world ; and that the Executive Committee report to the affiliated association or bodies any such official acting contrary to the spirit of the constitution as hereby amended."

Curran declared that the delegates would remember the resolution brought forward at the Trade Union Congress at Plymouth (1899) by the Society of Railway Servants declaring that the time was ripe for a parliamentary Labour group to act independently. That resolution was passed by the Congress, and the following January a special conference met in London to form this representation committee. The constitution, as then drafted, was admittedly weak because of the infancy of the movement that they were then inaugurating. To-day the movement had grown even beyond the anticipations of the most sanguine. They were to-day in Newcastle, historical so far as programmes were concerned, representing nearly a million organised workers throughout the length and breadth of this country. The newspapers every morning were telling them to be good boys, informing them that they should go on the path of political virtue and righteousness ; in fact, the papers were

condescending to tell them that the possibility was that they (the press) might see their way to help. He made bold to say that the time had arrived when the working class movement could stand politically upon its own legs; that there were enough people represented at this conference to form a movement—not necessarily antagonistic to other parties, but outside and independent—to formulate their own policy and carry it into the House of Commons, and try to obtain there for it due support. He said that if this line were not adopted the movement had no mission. Why did they call it into existence if they could find redemption through either party? But most men at this conference were convinced in their heart of hearts that no political party in the State to-day outside their movement would grapple with those deep-rooted evils which we desired to see eradicated. It was because they were convinced of this that they were there to strengthen and solidify their movement. Calling upon the responsible officials of affiliated organisations to abstain from identifying themselves with other parties was only the necessary and logical sequence of the meeting there that afternoon, if they were going to have a movement, solid, acting together in and out of the House of Commons. They were only weakening themselves if they strengthened other parties. He wanted to say that they had lessons in history why they should act on the lines suggested. Over half a century ago the old Chartist movement originated among the hills of Durham. Yet the Chartist movement became weak enough to be absorbed in one of the political parties and so became useless. The Labour Electoral Association existed in this country, and had within its ranks some of the best trade unionists that could be found, and many of them were present. It attached itself to the tail end of one of the parties, and was to-day extinct. Let them take a lesson, and let them strengthen their constitution in a way that would not tie down the trade unionist to socialism, nor the socialist to trade unionism, but both to Labour. By so doing they would keep the best men in the ranks, and be able to accomplish those valuable reforms that they aspired to accomplish at the earliest possible moment.

John Hodge, M.P. (Steel Smelters), seconded the resolution

After an exhaustive discussion, in which Bell, Ward, and other opponents of independence had spoken and endeavoured to show that independence was tantamount to isolation and destruction of the movement, Keir Hardie rose to argue that the opponents of independence really meant to bring Labour back to a policy of weak and unprincipled opportunism. In reality there was but one weapon which would stand the test of time and prove effective : adhesion to an honest principle. Any departure from that would ruin their Labour movement. They all, Liberal, Tory, and socialist alike, rejoiced at the magnificent conference got together in that hall. What was the principle that enabled them all to come together and discuss this matter? Independence. If they, the socialists, had insisted that all should be socialists, there would be no such gathering. Had the Liberals insisted that all should be Liberals, they would have had the like result. They had fixed upon a common denominator that, when acting in the House of Commons, they should be neither socialists, Liberals, nor Tories, but a Labour party. They were seeking by the resolution to prevent individuals from disrupting the movement. What the resolution said was that the officials of this conference should not, on their own initiative, and because of certain political predilections of their own, give this movement a bias which would affect it to its foundations. The Parnell movement was organised on an independent basis. Every Irish branch was a strictly non-political organisation, holding its force in reserve to use in any way the council told it. They desired their forces to be used in the same way. If some stood as Liberals, and others as Tories, and others as socialists, the divisions that now rent Labour would be continued. When a man who represented a trade union, who was being paid by a trade union, passed over the Trades Council and the organised trade unions of a constituency, in order to have himself selected by a Liberal or Tory organisation, he was not playing the game straight. Let them beware lest they surrender themselves to Liberalism, which would shackle them, gag them, and leave them a helpless, discredited, and impotent mass. Let them have done with Liberalism and Toryism and every other " ism " that was not

Labourism, and let them give the rank and file a straight and honest lead, and if that were done the rank and file would support them.

Hardie's speech, in which the term "Labourism" was coined, was followed by speeches from Ben Tillett and Curran, who clinched the argument for independence. The resolution was then put and carried by a card vote of 659,000 to 154,000. It was embodied in the constitution of the L.R.C. and formed the so-called "pledge" of the Labour Members of Parliament to abide by the decisions of the Party. The revised constitution, or the "Newcastle Programme" of the Labour Party, ran as follows:—

I.

The Labour Representation Committee is a federation of trade unions, trades councils, the Independent Labour Party, and the Fabian Society. Co-operative societies are also eligible for membership.

II.—OBJECT

To secure, by united action, the election to Parliament of candidates promoted, in the first instance, by an affiliated society or societies in the constituency, who undertake to form or join a distinct group in Parliament, with its own Whips and its own policy on Labour questions, to abstain strictly from identifying themselves with or promoting the interests of any section of the Liberal or Conservative parties, and not to oppose any other candidate recognised by this Committee. All such candidates shall pledge themselves to accept this constitution, to abide by the decisions of the group in carrying out the aims of this constitution or resign, and to appear before their constituencies under the title of Labour candidates only.

III.—THE EXECUTIVE

The Executive shall consist of thirteen members, nine representing the trade unions, one the trades councils, one the Fabian Society, and two the Independent Labour Party. The members shall be elected by their respective organisations at the Annual Conference.

IV.—DUTIES OF THE EXECUTIVE

The Executive Committee shall appoint a chairman, vice-chairman, and treasurer; shall transact the affairs of the Committee, and make proper arrangements for the payment of permanent officers when necessary.

It shall keep in touch with trade unions and other organisations, local and national, which are running Labour candidates, and on the approach of a general election it shall prepare a list of candidates run in accordance with the constitution, shall publish this list, and shall recommend these candidates for the support of the working class electors. The members shall strictly abstain from identifying themselves with or promoting the interests of any section of the Liberal or Conservative parties.

It shall report to affiliated organisations if the chief officials of any affiliated body publicly oppose the approved candidates of the Committee, or if any member of this Executive, Member of Parliament or candidate, who has been endorsed by the Committee, act contrary to the spirit of this constitution.

The revised constitution worked fairly well up to the end of 1908. The pledge was not too strictly applied, the Labour members having been left free to vote, in matters of conscience, as they thought right, but on the whole the party showed a united and unbroken front. From 1909 onwards the constitution has been weakened from the following causes: In the first place, the miners' federation, the largest British alliance of unions, numbering over a half a million, joined the Labour Party and brought with them a strong minority of Liberal Labour men and fourteen Liberal Labour members of Parliament. The infusion of so many Liberal elements into the party acted necessarily as a solvent on the mental cohesion and discipline of the new movement. Secondly, the growing national crisis caused by the Liberal Finance Bills and the conflict between the Commons and the Lords could not fail to induce the Labour Party to support the Liberals and to restrain its criticism of the Government. It was simply impossible for the Labour members to maintain their independence and to attack a Government which was engaged in a battle for democratic and social reform progress

Finally, in addition to those disturbing factors, the action of W. V. Osborne *v.* the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants threatened the financial resources of the party and for a time all but paralysed its activities.

3.—THE OSBORNE DECISION

The penal laws, actions, and law court decisions against organised working men up to 1906 had for their aim either the destruction of the trade unions or the restraining of their activities and methods. It was the economic combination and procedure of the wage earners which were regarded as illegal. The Trade Disputes Act, 1906, closed the period of trade union disabilities and rendered the collective economic action of the working classes perfectly legal. At the very moment of their decisive victory the trade unions were confronted with a new legal problem. The rise of the Labour Party meant the conversion of the economic organisations of Labour into a vast political confederation. The economic class had grown into a political class—economics as its basis, politics as its superstructure. The Trade Union Acts, 1871, 1875, 1876, and 1906, had undoubtedly economic objects in view, and only these were legalised. The entrance of the unions as such into politics produced a series of new facts, for which no legal regulations existed. The British Labour Party was not at that time an organised collection of individuals having similar political views, but a confederation of trade societies which by virtue of a majority vote were supposed to act politically in concert. The party, according to its constitution, pursued an independent Labour policy with the view of acquiring political power or obtaining a majority in Parliament over the Liberals and Conservatives. The manner in which affiliation took place necessarily left a number of Liberal and Conservative minorities which were, none the less, pledged to make financial contributions towards the upkeep of a party which is opposed both to the Liberals and Conservatives. Hence the opposition of Liberal working men to the compulsory levies and to the use of trade union funds for political purposes. They argued somewhat in the following manner:

It was indeed true that in purely trade union questions they submitted to the decisions of the majority, but they could not be expected to do violence to their conscience and pay contributions for socialist objects or for a policy directed against the Liberals. To these objections the party replied: The object of trade unionism was to promote the interests of the workers; for nearly half a century the trade unions had been acting on the generally accepted view that these interests were to be promoted not only by economic methods, but also by parliamentary action; until 1900 they believed that the furtherance of the interests of Labour could, politically, be best attained by acting as auxiliaries of the Liberal Party. Gradually, however, the conviction had been borne in upon them that a separate Labour Party was necessary for this purpose; the levies which they were now demanding were therefore destined for trade union objects. Were they to permit minorities to take up an independent position directly opposed to that of the party as a whole, then no organisation whatever would be possible and each member of the working class would suffer in consequence. It had been happening often enough that trade unionist minorities went into a strike, though they could not, conscientiously, approve of it. Human arrangements were never perfect; and so long as anarchism was an impossibility, the least defective mode of organisation was democracy or the submission of the minority to the majority.

The first conflict of this kind arose in 1905, when the plumbers' union in Canning Town asked for the return of their contributions paid for political purposes. The disagreement was settled amicably. Still, the leaders of the Labour Party, foreseeing future difficulties that might arise from the opposition of militant minorities, took the opinion of the two eminent lawyers, Sir Robert Reid (now Lord Loreburn) and Sir Edward Clarke. Both of them gave it as their opinion that the Trade Union Acts were no obstacle to political action. The leaders of the Labour Party then approached the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies, who gave a decision on this point in favour of the trade union majorities, but urged that appropriate alterations should be made

in their rules in order that the trade unionists should be made acquainted with the political purposes of their organisations. The matter was then thought to have been finally settled.

In 1908 the whole question was brought up again by a Liberal railway servant, W. V. Osborne (Walthamstow), and taken to the law courts. In his plea he stated that compulsory levies by trade unions for political purposes were *ultra vires*. In the first instance, Justice Neville dismissed the application. The case was carried to the higher courts, and the Master of the Rolls and finally the Law Lords delivered judgment to the effect that a trade union, as defined by the Trade Union Acts, acted *ultra vires* in raising compulsory levies for political purposes. One of the judges also pointed out that the " pledge " was unconstitutional.

At one stroke the financial resources of the Labour Party, or of the political action of the trade unions, appeared to have been cut off. It was even doubtful whether it was legal for trade unions to finance municipal elections, or to defray the expenses of the Trade Union Congress or of their deputations to the various Secretaries of State. The Liberal and Conservative minorities were not slow in taking advantage of the new legal situation. They applied to the law courts for injunctions against the levying of political contributions, and, as a rule, obtained them. The party suffered financially in 1909 and 1910 —at a time of great national excitement which was caused by the Lloyd George Budget and the constitutional crisis, when two general elections took place within twelve months. It must, however, be remarked that the Osborne judgment raised comparatively little indignation in the ranks of Labour. It came at a moment of political disillusionment among the most active elements of the organised workers, who were fast turning to economic action and even to a modified syndicalism, while the revolutionary socialists thought the Osborne judgment to be favourable to their cause, since it might induce the party to shed Labourism and make the adherence to socialist principles the test of membership. Still, there remained a good many trade unionists and socialists, among them being the Parliamentary Labour Party, who sincerely desired a reversal of the Osborne judgment and the

legalisation of the political activities of the trade unions. They brought as much pressure to bear upon the Liberal Government as they could, and they succeeded in exacting from it, first, payment of members of Parliament by the State; secondly, the Trade Union Act, 1913, which represents a fair compromise between the contending parties. A trade union may henceforth use its funds for political objects, provided a majority of members voting on the question so decide. It does not matter how small the number may be who vote; the majority of even a minority of members is sufficient. The Act further safeguards the liberties of the dissenting minorities by giving them the right of exemption from political contributions if they give notice that they object to contribute; they may ask, and the trade union is under the obligation to return to them, *pro rata*, the monies spent for political objects. Above all, the Act practically obviates all possibilities of law court actions in this matter by setting up the Chief Registrar as umpire between the contending majority and minority. The Act was the work of Sir Rufus Isaacs (now Lord Reading), who was at that time Attorney-General.

On the other hand, the party, at the end of September, 1910, decided to abandon the "pledge" in order to remove the objections which had been raised against it on constitutional grounds. A resolution to that effect was carried by the Labour Party conference in 1911.

In pursuance of this Act the trade unions had to take ballots on the question of using trade union funds for political action. Up to the end of May, 1914, sixty-three unions took a ballot of their members as to political objects. In the aggregate they showed 678,063 votes in favour of such objects and 407,356 against. Only three small unions had each a majority of votes against. Many other unions were carrying out the procedure under this Act, but the results were not made public, since the War diverted the attention of Labour from party affairs.

	Votes in favour.	Votes against.
Miners' Federation of Great Britain ..	261,643	194,800
National Union of Railwaymen	102,270	34,953
Amalgamated Society of Locomotive Enginemen and Firemen	7,839	3,841
Railway Clerks' Association	15,496	1,340
Amalgamated Society of Engineers ..	20,586	12,740
Amalgamated Weavers' Association ..	98,158	75,893
National Union of Gasworkers	27,802	4,339
National Union of Dock and Riverside Workers	4,078	501
National Union of Boot Operatives ..	6,085	1,935
Union of Co-operative Employees ..	11,130	11,967
National Union of Clerks	1,844	540
Prudential Assurance Agents	1,304	313

Owing to the outbreak of the War, the matter was not further pursued. Armageddon pushed all such questions into the background, and changed, in its course, also the complexion and constitution of the Party. These changes will be dealt with in the concluding chapters.

XVIII

THE SOCIAL REVOLUTIONARY FERMENT

I.—ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INFLUENCES

THE future historian, poring on his records and materials and calling upon his constructive imagination to draw a true picture of Great Britain in the period from 1908 to 1920, will gradually behold the unrolling of a series of social revolutionary developments, with the Great War but an episode and the various reform measures as so many concessions wrested by the working class and democracy. For the arrangements of society, constitutional and institutional, appeared to have lost well-nigh all stability. Ferment and unrest spread throughout all ranks. The accepted views on commercial policy and public finance, on the relation between the Commons and the Lords, on the position of woman in political life, on trade unionism and socialism were fiercely assailed and more or less shaken. Even conservative minds, usually averse from popular agitation, were thinking and speaking of revolutionary methods and rebellious acts. Educated and refined women had recourse to terroristic and conspiratory deeds. And masses of workmen, organised and unorganised, used the weapon of the strike on an unprecedented scale. Capital and Labour moved in phalanxes against one another. The whole nation was in movement, as if driven by elemental forces. Taking drama as a mirror of the time it may be said that the nation moved within the short space of ten years (1898–1908) from Pinero's *Gay Lord Quex* to Shaw's *Major Barbara* and Galsworthy's *Strife*. The most salient feature of this amazing chapter of contemporary history was the appeal to economic facts and needs and to new social ethics. Economics, social statistics, prices and cost of living, trade and commercial

re-organisation, taxation, and social reform legislation filled the minds of the nation. Behind all constitutional, legislative, and popular questions stood everywhere the economic factor and the ethical problem.

British industrial life has since 1880 been undergoing profound changes. Under the pressure of the German and American advance the leaders of British industry, trade, shipping, and commerce have gradually adopted new methods of organisation, which are aiming at the regulation of competition by mutual agreements and combines for the purpose of securing economies in production, distribution, and exchange, as well as of gaining greater control of labour.[1] Administrative centralisation, scientific management, constant improvement of machinery have cheapened production and gradually enabled British industry to face foreign competition. The new methods of production and distribution could not fail, however, to press upon the working and lower middle classes. Since the beginning of the new century British Labour has been raising its voice against the " speeding-up " methods, and the lower middle classes have been living in dread of losing their independence. Indeed, since 1880 and in a more pronounced degree since 1900 a new factory system has arisen which bears the same relation to the factory system of the beginning of the nineteenth century as intensive cultivation to extensive agriculture, or, better still, as the modern armies to the old ones. The constantly growing mechanisation of the processes of production and locomotion, as well as the enormous development of land and sea traffic, brought a host of unskilled workmen, unused to the discipline of old trade unionism, into close proximity to skilled labour or gave them an equal status with it. The traditional gulf between the two categories of labour was gradually bridged. The skilled workers felt their privileged and protected position seriously threatened, and many of them began to learn the lesson of the solidarity of Labour—namely, that the interests of the wage earners, as a whole, no matter what their special crafts or trades or professions might be, were

[1] *U.S. Industrial Commission Report*, Vol. XVIII., p. 15 *sqq.*, quoted in Carter, *Tendency oward Industrial Combination*, pp. 3–4.

inseparably interwoven with one another. Sectionalism is disappearing, Labour alliances are being formed, hand and brain workers are coalescing.

In commerce and finance a similar process has come into operation. The wholesale traders are reducing the retail traders to the rôle of distributive agents working on commission. And the great manufacturers are gaining control both over the wholesale and retail trade. The great departmental store, the large importers, and the co-operative societies have been displacing great numbers of small shopkeepers. The tendency of modern times appears to be the displacement of the independent lower middle class by a salaried class of clerks, salesmen, officials, and civil servants. This process of concentration in commerce and finance could not escape the observation of a sociological writer like H. G. Wells. "Shopkeeping, like manufactures," he declares, "began to concentrate in large establishments, and by wholesale distribution to replace individual buying and selling . . . The once flourishing shopkeeper lives to-day on the mere remnants of the trade that great distributing stores or the branches of great companies have left him. Tea companies, provision-dealing companies, tobacconist companies, make the position of the old-established private shop unstable and the chances of the new beginner hopeless. Railway and tramway take the custom more and more effectually past the door of the small draper and outfitter to the well-stocked establishments at the centre of things; telephone and telegraph assist that shopping at the centre more and more. . . . And this is equally true of the securities of that other section of the middle class, the section which lives upon invested money. There, too, the big eats the little. Through the seas and shallows of investment flow great tides and depressions, on which the big fortunes ride to harbour while the little accumulations, capsized and swamped, quiver down to the bottom." [1]

Finally, the two most popular political leaders of the first decade of the new century, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain and Mr. Lloyd George, taught the masses to think in economics. The

[1] H. G. Wells, *New Worlds for Old*, 1908, ch. viii. § 1.

tariff reform movement, initiated by the former in May, 1903, not only stimulated economic thought but brought the condition of England question before the nation. In working class meetings the tariff reform leaders spoke of the problem of unemployment, of loss of wages, and of the relatively bad condition of Labour. The most fundamental aspects of manufacture and agriculture were discussed and investigated. Indeed, not since the Anti-Corn Law agitation in the 'forties of the last century did the working classes receive so thorough an economic education as during the tariff reform controversy. The reply to the tariff reform movement was a Liberal campaign against landlordism, mining royalties, and the House of Lords. After the general election of 1906, Liberal speakers continued to press social economic questions to the front. Dismayed by the rapid growth of the Labour Party and still believing in the peril of tariff reform, Lloyd George came forward as the chief defender of Liberalism against both the tariff reformers and the socialists. Speaking on October 11, 1906, at Cardiff, he declared :—

" You must remember that up to the present there has been no real effort to counteract the socialist mission amongst the workmen. When that effort is made you may depend it will find it adherents even amongst working men. Common sense bids Liberals and Labour to get along together as far as we can to-day, and not to block the road of progress by standing on it in groups to quarrel about the stage we hope to reach the day after to-morrow. We want the assistance of Labour to give direction to the policy of Liberalism and to give nerve and boldness to its attack. If the able men who now think that they are best serving the cause of progress by trying to shatter Liberalism were to devote their energies and their talents to guide and to strengthen and to embolden Liberalism, they would render higher and more enduring service to progress. But I have one word for Liberals. I can tell them what will make this independent Labour Party movement a great and sweeping force in this country. If at the end of an average term of office it were found that a Liberal Parliament had done nothing to cope seriously with the social condition of the people, to remove the national degradation of

slums and widespread poverty and destitution in a land glittering with wealth, that they had shrunk to attack boldly the main causes of this wretchedness, notably the drink and this vicious land system, that they had not arrested the waste of our national resources in armaments, nor provided an honourable sustenance for deserving old age, that they had tamely allowed the House of Lords to extract all the virtue out of their Bills, then would a real cry arise in this land for a new party, and many of us here in this room would join in that cry. But if a Liberal Government tackle the landlords, and the brewers, and the peers, as they have faced the parsons, and try to deliver the nation from the pernicious control of this confederacy of monopolists, then the independent Labour Party will call in vain upon the working men of Britain to desert Liberalism that is gallantly fighting to rid the land of the wrongs that have oppressed those who labour in it."

The leading ideas of this speech form the keynote of the subsequent work of Lloyd George as Chancellor of the Exchequer. The rise of the Labour Party meant the end of the Liberal Party, and it was the duty of the Liberal leaders to enlarge and strengthen their creed by adopting those socialist reform measures which they thought to be practicable. The region of Liberalism having become arid was to be made fertile by irrigation from the rivers of socialist thought. The Finance Bills of the years 1908 to 1914 were the result of these efforts. The distinction made between earned and unearned incomes ; the transformation of the Budget into an instrument of social reform ; the heated discussions to which the new financial measures gave rise ; the impassioned and inflaming oratory of Mr. Lloyd George at Limehouse (London, E.) and other working class centres ; the land reform agitation, with its inevitable references to the fundamental tenets of socialism ; finally, the constitutional struggle between the Commons and the Lords, which necessarily carried the mind of the nation back to the great conflicts and crises of English history, added a force to the social agitation and unrest.

Another aggravating factor was the continual rise of prices, which began in 1896 and was growing increasingly pronounced

since 1907 and which resulted in a considerable reduction of the real wages. As far back as 1909, the Labour Party Executive in their Report to the Ninth Annual Conference at Portsmouth drew the attention of the delegates to those facts: three years later, the *Fifteenth Abstract of Labour Statistics of the U.K.* (London, 1912, Cd. 6228) showed that in the years 1900–1911 in the five principal trades (building, mining, engineering, textiles, agriculture) the increase of wages amounted to 0.31 per cent., the wholesale prices of foodstuffs rose by 11.6 per cent., and London retail prices by 9.3 per cent.; and in 1913 the *Board of Trade Report on Wages* confirmed the painful discrepancy between wages and prices, and thus supplied official material for the revolutionary agitation.[1] The electoral victories and the usual trade union methods, it appeared, resulted in an economic defeat. Revolutionary writers and speakers did not fail to point the moral and draw the lesson against parliamentary action and old trade union leadership. The light of State socialism began to pale before the rise of syndicalism, guild socialism, and direct action.

The Great War accelerated or matured all those tendencies and movements. The dilution of labour, the employment of masses of unskilled and woman workers in skilled trades, the rapid increase of automatic machinery, and the latitude accorded to the manufacturer to draw tighter the net of scientific management, formed a demonstration *ad hominem* that the privileged position of the upper strata of Labour has vanished. Women's work penetrated, with surprising success, even into the closely guarded domain of the engineering industry. "In particular the Bristol exhibition was remarkable for the many hundreds of specimens of work wholly or mainly done by women. Apart from the still larger range covered by the photographs, fourteen separate groups of samples were shown, dealing respectively with aircraft engines, motor-car engines, magnetos and other accessories of internal combustion engines, locomotives and stationary engines, guns and gun components, small arms, gauges,

[1] *Cf.* S. G. Hobson, *Guild Principles in War and Peace*, London (Bell & Sons), 198, pp. 17–18.

cutters and allied work, drawing dies and punches, welded and other aircraft fittings, aircraft framing and structural parts, projectiles, miscellaneous engineering, and optical and glass work. The list is long, but its very length summarises no more than fairly the variety of applications that are being made of women's services in one work or another. A similar variety was seen in the composition of most of the individual groups." [1] War finance and commerce favoured the process of economic amalgamation and concentration. Joint stock banks, shipping companies, chemical works, coal, iron, and steel concerns formed alliances or were linked up with one another. The rich grew richer and the position of the middle classes grew more precarious.[2] Liberalism, which Mr. Lloyd George had expected to rid the land of socialism and independent Labour politics, was finally shattered by the war. A part, however, of his Cardiff prophecy came true. He had warned his audience that "if at the end of an average term of office it were found that a Liberal Parliament had done nothing to cope seriously with the social condition of the people, to remove the national degradation of slums . . . to arrest the waste of our national resources in armaments . . . then would a real cry arise for a new party, and many of us would join in that cry." Many Radicals not only joined in that cry, but joined the Independent Labour Party and other socialist organisations; the idealists among the intellectuals have even taken the lead in the social revolutionary movements. The influence of the War on the rise of prices is too obvious to need any further remark. And the accumulated effect of all those developments has been the accentuation of the economic factor and the cleavage between the classes on the one hand, and the weakening of Parliamentary action and purely political democracy, on the other. Here we touch Bolshevik ground.

[1] *Times Engineering Supplement*, June 29, 1917.

[2] "For every 20s. which the Government spent during the war they borrowed 16s. This system of financing Government expeditions tends to accumulate more and more wealth in the hands of the well-to-do." (Sidney Webb, in *Labour Year Book*, 1919, p. 68.)

2.—EDUCATIONAL INFLUENCES

Meanwhile, the education of the upper strata of the working classes grew apace. Elementary education, continuation schools, debating societies, cheap reprints of some of the best books, socialist propaganda, the classes conducted by the Workers' Educational Association, which was founded in 1903, and to which 1,071 trade unions, trade union branches, and trades councils, and 384 co-operative societies and committees are now affiliated, and Ruskin College at Oxford have produced a young generation of working men responsive to the mental currents of the time. Great Britain possesses now what it never possessed—Labour intellectuals with a healthy desire for the study of economics, social history, and science. In the 230 University Tutorial Classes, organised by the Workers' Educational Association, there are now some 4,000 students engaged in courses of study lasting for not less than three years, and in the shorter classes which it has established, several thousand more. Ruskin College, founded by two Americans in 1899, has been preparing annually from thirty to forty of the ablest engineers, miners, railwaymen, and textile workers for further studies and self-education by imparting to them the elements of political economy, evolution, logic, industrial history, and sociology. Students of Ruskin College were among the first Labour intellectuals who responded to the syndicalist teachings which originated in America (Industrial Workers of the World or I.W.W.) and in France (*Confédération Générale du Travail* or C.G.T.). As far back as May, 1905, when I called at the College to prepare a report on this institution for the Berlin *Vorwärts*, I noticed a certain dissatisfaction among some students with the economic teaching of the College professors. The students desired to be taught economics from Marx's *Capital*, particularly the labour theory of value, instead of the Jevonian theory of marginal utility. After the election of 1906, with the sudden surging up of social economic problems, the dissatisfaction ripened into a conflict. The dissatisfied students formed a separate organisation called the Plebs League and finally seceded

in 1909. They established an institution of their own, the Central Labour College (now the Labour College), at first at Oxford, then in London. The spirit and aim of this institution may be gathered from the following guiding principles: "(1) The College to be based upon the recognition of the antagonism of interests between Capital and Labour. (2) The aim to be the imparting of education of a definitely utilitarian character, viz. the training necessary to equip workers to propagate and defend the interests of their class against the dominant ruling class ideas and theories prevalent in capitalist society. (3) The college to be owned and controlled by the representatives of organised Labour, viz. the trade unions, socialist and co-operative societies." The main props of the Labour College are the South Wales Miners' Federation and the National Union of Railwaymen, while the Plebs League, consisting of students, ex-students, and sympathisers, are controlling the curriculum and the spirit of the teaching, so as "to further the interest of independent working class education as a partizan effort to improve the position of Labour at present and ultimately to assist in the abolition of wage slavery." [1]

Revolutionary working class schools were established in Scotland, South Wales, and the Midlands, where the works of Marx, Engels, Dietzgen, Kautsky, Lenin, and Trotsky were studied and discussed. The materialist conception of history and the labour value theory were favourite subjects. The Scottish Labour College had, in 1919, an income of over £1,000. A small section of the British working class were being imbued with a spirit of generalisation. John Maclean, W. Paul, W. W. Craik, Noah Ablett, Walton Newbold acted as their teachers and writers in various parts of the country.[2]

Of the many books published on the eve of the Labour unrest none had so notable an effect as Sir Leo Money's *Riches and*

[1] *Oxford Chronicle*, October 20, 1911; Ruskin College, *Manifesto to the Students*, July, 1909; Plebs League, *The Democratic Control of Ruskin College*, Leicester, 1909; *The Plebs Magazine*, Sheffield (monthly), *Labour Year Book*, 1919, p. 294–5.

[2] *The Call* (London), December 11, 1919.

Poverty. The statistics showing the growth of the national income and its very unequal distribution could not fail to intensify the dissatisfaction which sprang from the general tendencies of the economic and political developments mentioned above. The statistical tables had come very opportunely to throw the dry light of facts and figures on a situation full of ferment and excitement. They were used by socialists and Labour speakers all over the country in a similar manner as Colquhoun's statistical table was used in the time of the incubation and rise of Chartism.[1]

3.—REVOLUTIONARY TRADE UNIONISM: DIRECT ACTION

The syndicalist movement or revolutionary trade unionism is differentiated from State socialism or collectivism by the emphasis it places (a) on the economic factor as the primary formative agent of social arrangements and social ethics, (b) on the economic antagonism between Capital and Labour, (c) on the direct action and struggle of the working class for its emancipation from the wage basis of livelihood and for the control of the means of production by Labour itself, (d) on the trade union and not on the electoral district as the focus of Labour power. Syndicalism, therefore, is averse from conciliation boards and industrial agreements between employers and employees; it recognises no social peace or even truce as long as the wage basis prevails; it is opposed to Parliamentary politics being made an integral and important part of the Labour movement; it scorns social reform by Liberal or Conservative or Labour legislation; it refuses to believe in the efficacy of a Labour policy acting through Parliamentary representatives and Labour officials. The syndicalist movement is pre-eminently revolutionary; the socialist movement is largely reformist. The former puts itself deliberately outside the present system of society in order the better to get hold of it and to shake it to its

[1] *Cf. The Highway* (monthly), W.E.A. Year Book; A. Mansbridge, *University Pictorial Classes; Oxford and Working Class Education*, 1908. R. H. Tawney, "An Experiment in Democratic Education," in the *Political Quarterly*, May, 1914. (Compare *Times*, January 14, 1914, note on the meeting of the Historical Association.)

very foundations ; the latter is working within the present order of society with the view of gradually changing it. The syndicalist knows therefore of no compromise ; class warfare, relentless and continual, is his supreme means. Starting from the premise (a) that economics rules social relations and shapes social ethics, (b) that the economic antagonism between Labour and Capital is irreconcilable, the syndicalist cannot arrive at any other conclusion.

These principles and inferences may be termed the syndicalist form of Marxism.

It must not be supposed, however, that the syndicalists are materialists on principle. There are among them profoundly spiritual thinkers ; but they believe that capitalist society is materialist and that no spiritual uplifting of the people, no social justice and individual salvation are possible unless capitalism, with money and financial success as the measure of all things, has been laid by the heels.

The first body to spread syndicalist views in Great Britain was the Socialist Labour Party in Scotland, whose members originally belonged to the Social Democratic Federation, but gradually came under the influence of the Socialist Labour Party in the United States of America and finally seceded from the S.D.F. in 1903. The leader of the American Socialist Labour Party was Daniel De Leon, a University lecturer and a strict adherent of Marxism, who for a long time worked on the application of Marxist theories to the American Labour movement. Disgusted with the corrupting influences of American politics, which, as he believed, rendered all Parliamentary action of socialist and Labour parties nugatory and corrupted the trade union leaders, he turned to the economic action of trade unionism organised for relentless class warfare and for the socialist objective.[1] Similar

[1] In November, 1899, when I went to New York on a lengthy visit to my parents, I was at once introduced to Daniel De Leon, with whom I remained on friendly terms till September, 1900. He was one of the straightest Marxists I had ever come across. Two years later, when I met Ulianov (Lenin) in London and enjoyed his friendship for over a year, I could not help being struck by the great similarity of character and views of both revolutionary leaders. De Leon believed literally in every word Marx had written.

views were, since 1903, springing up amongst socialist trade union leaders of the Marxist type and led in 1905 to the formation of the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.), which declared itself to be guided by the following principles :

" (1) There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people, and the few who make up the employing class have all the good things of life ; (2) the working class and the employing class have nothing in common ; (3) between these two classes a struggle must go on until all the toilers come together on the political as well as on the industrial field and take and hold that which they produce by their labour through an economic organisation of the working class without affiliation with any political party."

Parliamentary politics were not altogether eliminated, but were made strictly subservient to the economic action of Labour. Later on party politics were dropped and the I.W.W. turned anti-parliamentarian, since parliamentary action involved Labour in compromise with the political parties of the employing class. The leaders of the I.W.W. further argued that the economic organisation of Labour into multitudinous trade unions was obsolete, for the trade union originated in the relatively simple and individualist conditions of manufacture, whereas at the present day manufacture was developing on a vast scale and was based on national and international combines. The modern form of manufacture required not trade unions but industrial unions—Labour organisations as vast and combined as capitalist industry itself. The miners and all the workpeople employed about the mines, be they engineers, firemen, or general labourers, should form one comprehensive mining union ; the transport workers one single transportation union, instead of being split up and scattered in hundreds of local, district and trade societies, with their multifarious offices, officials, and consequent waste of energy and money, leading to inefficiency and failure. Concentra-

He held the materialist conception of history, the class war, and even the iron law of wages to need as little defence as the multiplication table. His capacity for work and his devotion to the cause won him the admiration even of those who were opposed to him on the score of his flint-like orthodoxy and his fanatical intolerance.

tion of the organised forces of Labour had become an urgent necessity, should the working class be able to face the combined forces of Capital. The extension of the local and district strikes to the general strike is but a corollary of the proposed new form of industrial organisation, or Industrial Unionism.

These views, propagated by the Socialist Labour Party in Scotland, gradually penetrated to the more intelligent or more alert members of the British trade unions and added to the fermentation which was dealt with in the foregoing section. The first symptoms of the operation of the new spirit manifested themselves in the rebellion of many trade unionists against their officials; from 1908 onwards it became a difficult matter for the officials of many trade unions to obtain from their members the ratification of agreements and settlements entered into by them with the employers. The British workman, generally loyal, began to refuse to follow his leader. It was partly under these influences that the formation of the Plebs League at Ruskin College took place. The League formed a section of the Industrial Workers of the World.[1]

The ideas of Industrial Unionism streaming from America through Scotland into England were supplemented and strengthened by the current of syndicalism coming from France. After the excitement of the Dreyfus affair and the disappointment with the socialist Minister Millerand, some of the Marxists and anarchists coalesced and turned the French *syndicats* or trade unions into the revolutionary *Confédération Générale du Travail.*[2] French syndicalism has been more theoretical and philosophical than American Industrial Unionism, but in essence both of them represent the same revolt against socialist and Labour parliamentarism and official-ridden and petty trade unionism.

[1] *The Preamble of the I.W.W.*, published by the Socialist Labour Party, Edinburgh; *Industrial Unionism*, by G. Harvey, Edinburgh; David Evans, *Labour Strife in the South Wales Coalfields*, Cardiff, 1911; *English Review*, March, 1912 (R. Kenney, "The Brains behind the Labour Revolt").

[2] An account of the rise of French Syndicalism is given by G. D. H. Cole in his *Self-Government in Industry*, 3rd edition, pp. 303–321, London, 1917.

The French influence was brought to bear on the British Labour movement by Tom Mann, a staunch trade unionist and socialist, with a golden heart and mercurial brain. He is one of the best known figures and most effective speakers in the International Labour movement. In the oratorical tournament which took place at the International Socialist Congress in London, 1896, and in which Jaurès, Millerand, Bebel, and Hyndman participated, Tom Mann's intervention on behalf of the admission of the anarchist delegates made a deep impression. Like most of the British socialist leaders, Mann was stimulated by Henry George's propaganda tour in the United Kingdom in 1882 and 1884, and soon became one of the main forces of British trade unionism, and together with John Burns organised the London strikes in 1887–1889. He joined the S.D.F., afterwards the I.L.P., whose general secretary he was from 1895 to 1898. Disheartened by the slow progress of the social revolution in Great Britain, he left for Australia, where he was active in the Labour movement until 1910, when he returned to his native country, and in order to study the French syndicalist application of Marxist theories to trade union strife, he, in June, 1910, went to Paris. He "was much impressed with the attitude of the revolutionary comrades in France, who had been able to accomplish a magnificent work by permeating the unions and forming the C.G.T." [1] The journey to Paris was, however, by no means the *hegira* of Mann. Unknown to himself, he had imbibed in Australia the spirit of the American I.W.W. His studies among the French workmen were but the finishing touches to his conversion. After his return from Paris he at once set to work to permeate the British trade unions, which, as Mann admits, for some five or six years previously had carried on "an agitation for the closer combination of the unions and for the adoption of different tactics." With the assistance of Guy Bowman, a socialist journalist who knows the French language, he edited, from July, 1910, to June, 1911, a monthly series of syndicalist booklets, entitled the *Industrial Syndicalist*, in which the need and means for better organisation

[1] Tom Mann, *From Single Tax to Syndicalism*, 1913, p. 64.

were outlined. Some of them are ably and effectively written, and all of them had a good circulation. On November 26, 1910, a conference of syndicalists took place in Manchester, which was attended by some two hundred delegates representing sixty thousand workers. As a result of this conference the Industrial Syndicalist Educational League was formed, under whose auspices the monthly paper *Syndicalist* was edited from the beginning of 1912 to the middle of 1914. Apart from these monthly booklets, the best of which was the *Miners' Next Step*, there appeared from time to time special periodicals like *The Syndicalist Railwayman*, *The Transport Worker*, and fly-sheets to the miners. The main idea of all those publications and activities was the class struggle as expressed through direct action and the general strike. Parliamentarism should not be altogether abandoned, but made subservient to economic action, or the " best English Club " should be transformed into the best platform for revolutionary agitation. Behind the Labour politician should always stand the revolutionary trade unionist and dictate his attitude in the House of Commons, since the politician was apt to forget the class character of the State and to talk of the General Will, where in reality there was but the special interest of the capitalist class. The utmost such a politician or old trade union leader could look for, was State socialism, which really signified State capitalism, while the revolutionary trade unionist was always conscious of the fact that Government was but the executive of the possessing classes, and that the emancipation of Labour could only be effected by the working class themselves, by their own ceaseless fighting on the economic battlefield. Nationalisation and municipalisation could not release the proletariate from the grip of the capitalists and their Government tools. Hence, instead of State socialism, the proletariate must work for the control and administration of the means of production by and for Labour.

Meanwhile, other and far abler champions of revolutionary socialism entered the political arena. The *New Age*, a weekly review, founded in 1907 by members of the Fabian Society, and edited with great literary ability and intellectual freedom

by A. R. Orage, was transformed into a centre of educated revolutionary criticism ; its weekly notes on current political and Labour affairs, though often one-sided because written in the midst of battle and with the view of provoking thought and controversy, formed a running commentary on contemporary British history. But a still more ambitious journalistic venture was undertaken by the publication of the *Daily Herald* (April, 1912, suspended on account of the war in September, 1914), which from the beginning of its career formed a platform for all heterodox opinions and rebellious minds. It was a thorn in the side of the Labour Party and a fearless critic of Liberalism. It often mistook the mob for the people and vulgarity for vigour; but it atoned for these errors of judgment by a profoundly spiritual attitude towards the Labour and socialist problems. The *Daily Herald* contained some of the basest epithets in the English language, but also some of the noblest aspirations of the human mind. During the war *The Herald* appeared as a weekly and was one of the best trade union papers ; its writers on this subject were G. D. H. Cole and W. Mellor. At the beginning of 1919 *The Herald* reappeared in its old form as a daily, under the editorship of George Lansbury.

These movements against the existing social order and against Parliamentarism and political democracy were indirectly strengthened by Hilaire Belloc and Cecil Chesterton, whose literary activities bore the same relation to the British ferment as those of Brunetière, Faguet, Maurras, and Chéradame to the French syndicalist philosophy of Sorel and Lagardelle. The years from 1909 to 1913 witnessed in France a veritable torrent of invective against democracy. Nationalists, chauvinists, and revolutionary syndicalists vied with each other to represent democracy as a sink of corruption and imbecility, as a confederation of freemasons, Jews, Protestants, and aliens, whose main purpose was to ruin France or to sell her to Germany. French democracy was on its trial for life.[1] Hilaire Belloc, with his French literary

[1] Those who desire to learn something of the French anti-democratic literature prior to the war will obtain much information from Georges Guy-Grand, *Le Procès de la Démocratie*, Paris, 1911 (Colin).

training, transferred those Parisian creations to London and found a fervent coadjutor in Cecil Chesterton, who, after having been successively an admirer of Sidney Webb and H. M. Hyndman, embraced Roman Catholicism and joined Belloc in his crusade against British democracy. Their pamphlets, *The Party System* and *The Servile State*, as well as their journalism in *The New Witness*, strengthened the hands of the British syndicalists in their assault on political democracy and added much turbid matter to the social ferment of the years 1911–1913.

4.—THE MASS STRIKE MOVEMENTS

The most striking effect of all those various factors was the Labour unrest, which found expression in the rapid growth of trade unionism and the national strikes. The aggregate membership of the British trade unions, which in 1899 was 1,861,000, and 2,369,000 in 1909, amounted in 1920 to over six millions! The trade union statistics of the last twenty years may be summed up by saying that the years 1899–1905, when the Taff Vale decision was paralysing trade union activities, were a period of stagnation or decline; the years 1906–1910, when parliamentary action culminated, formed a period of slight revival; and the years since 1910, with their increasingly syndicalist character, have been marked by a growth which is, in a comparative sense, extraordinary. Moreover, the tendency has manifestly been towards larger and fewer societies, or towards the combination of smaller societies into larger and better managed trade organisations. Labour has been marshalling its forces and imbuing them with a spirit of solidarity and battle:—

TRADE DISPUTES

Year.	No of workpeople directly involved.	Aggregate duration in working days.
1907	100,728	1,878,679
1908	223,969	10,632,638
1909	170,258	2 560,425
1910	385,085	9,545,531
1911	831,104	7,620,367
1912	1,233,016	38,142,101

In the first three years of the war (1914–1916) the strike movement abated, but in 1917 it revived, the number of workpeople

involved amounted to 821,000, and the aggregate number of strike days amounted to 5,514,000. Some of these strikes bore a social revolutionary character, to which we shall refer in a later chapter.

The years 1911–1913 will ever be memorable in the annals of British Labour. The United Kingdom witnessed for the first time a class war in which all its component parts were involved. English, Welsh, and Scottish miners, English railwaymen and Irish transport workers were joining hands across the borders and seas. Robert Smillie, Tom Mann, James Larkin, and James Connolly, all born fighters, marshalled and led the new forces in battle array. Nothing like it had ever happened before ; neither in comprehensiveness nor in numbers had that Labour upheaval any parallel in British social history. A comparison of this strike movement with that of the years 1839–42 exhibits in an unmistakable manner the enormous advance British Labour has made in organising and executive capacity.

The upheaval of 1911–1913, though apparently defeated, profoundly affected British social and political history. The Irish transport strike disclosed the misery of the Dublin proletariate, but also their dour determination and revolutionary fervour. The manifestoes of Larkin and Connolly were distinguished by a high spirit of Labour solidarity and socialist self-sacrifice. They laid the foundation of that remarkable coalition between revolutionary Labour and nationalist Sinn-Fein, as well as of the " Citizen Army," both of whom played their part in the Irish Easter tragedy of 1916. Connolly, the author of *Labour in Irish History*, fell in the insurrection.[1]

Another effect, likewise pregnant with social revolutionary portents, was the formation, in April, 1914, of the Triple Industrial Alliance of miners, railwaymen, and transport workers, with an aggregate membership of 1,500,000. Moreover, Robert Smillie, President of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain and the brain of the Alliance, expressed the opinion that, while the scheme at the moment was not intended to include more than the

[1] Concerning Connolly's views on Socialism and Labour, compare S. and B. Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, 1920, pp. 655-657.

three trades referred to, "it may well be found advisable later on to extend the scope of the Alliance in the general interests of Labour as a whole." [1] The miners, forming the main strength of the industrial alliance, have been agitating for the nationalisation of the mining industry, and have tried to educate public opinion to the necessity of such a measure. One of the most striking means used for that purpose was the Coal Commission which, under the menace of a general strike, was held in London in the spring, 1919, under the chairmanship of Justice Sankey. The representation of Labour on this Commission was remarkable, having embodied the coalition of hand and brain workers, viz. Robert Smillie, Herbert Smith, and Frank Hodges (miners), Sir Leo Money, R. H. Tawney, and Sidney Webb. The evidence and the discussion ranged from wages, profits, and hours of work to the origin of property, land nationalisation, and Marxism. It was a landmark in social development. The Sankey Report was a victory for Labour. The first Report, signed by Mr. Justice Sankey and three business men, declared that "even upon the evidence already given, the present system of ownership and working in the coal industry stands condemned, and some other system must be substituted for it, either nationalisation or a method of unification by national purchase and (or) by joint control." [2]

Nationalisation has become a burning question. We shall see in one of the next chapters the meaning of it.

5.—RISE OF GUILD SOCIALISM

Notable attempts at interpreting and guiding the Labour ferment were made in the pages of the *New Age* (1907–1914) by Arthur J. Penty, S. G. Hobson, and G. D. H. Cole, resulting in the creation of a socialist Guild movement. Penty, a thoughtful mediævalist and Christian social writer of outstanding ability, must be regarded as the pioneer of the modern Guild idea, but it was Hobson and Cole[3] who adapted it to current socialist philosophy. Cole sees in the new Labour movement the inchoate

[1] Robert Smillie, *Labour Year Book*, 1916, p. 103–04.
[2] R. Page Arnot, *Facts from the Coal Commission*, 1919.

expression of the desire of the more intelligent and alert workmen for the control of production. He argues that socialist and Labour parties and collectivist schools had been regarding the social problem first and foremost as a problem of distribution of the division of the national income. A more equitable distribution in the interest of Labour being impossible under the capitalist system of economics, the socialists and advanced Labour leaders proposed the transfer of the means of production from the private capitalist to the State. Nationalisation of the monopolies was their policy. They looked forward to an impartial State, controlling and organising industry, securing for the worker an adequate share in the wealth he produces, laying charges on industry for the benefit of the weak and incapable, and in other respects carrying on production much as it is carried on now, with a State Department in place of a limited company or combine and a bureaucrat in place of a managing director. On the other hand, syndicalism claimed for the worker not merely higher wages, but also something which it termed "control of industry." It demanded that men be regarded not as citizens and consumers only, but primarily as producers, that their work be recognised as the central fact of their lives. This tendency manifested itself even in the older trade unions, for whilst wages were still the dominant question of disputes with employers, another set of disputes was coming to the front which concerned conditions of labour, limitation of hours, employment of non-unionists—questions, in short, which touch the process of production or what had long been regarded as the exclusive sphere of the master class. This tendency towards transforming the trade union from a wage-bargaining into an organic unit of production should be developed and brought to maturity. From this point of view the trade unions represented the germs of the future organisation of industry. The trade union should do for modern industry what the guild did for the mediæval arts and crafts. Collectivism would form an industrial bureaucracy; syndicalism—an industrial democracy. Pending the consummation of this supreme end and aim, the workers, if they desired an improvement of their condition,

should co-ordinate their forces, organise on the basis of industrial unionism, and use the weapon of the strike, since political action could achieve little, if anything at all. The Liberal reforms in the years from 1906 onwards, for all the praise bestowed on them by politicians, had done practically nothing to raise the condition of Labour. The strike period from 1911 to 1913 had raised wages, improved the conditions of labour, and increased the respect for the organised working class far beyond any so-called social reform legislation could have done. Where the strike failed it was due to the obsolete form of trade union organisation. The day of the small union had passed. Large industry must be confronted with greater unionism. The small trade union was wasteful. Labour parliamentarism, as at present constituted, was a costly delusion

While Cole devotes much space to a review of Labour in France, America, and Germany with a view to tracing he new tendencies, the author of *National Guilds* deals exclusively with Labour and economic conditions in Great Britain. Its author and editor have drunk deep from the source of Marxism and have acquired method and system, which give to their work a logical sequence and unity not often to be found in English writings. The book must be regarded as one of the most important documents of the Labour unrest which dominated British home affairs in the years 1908 to 1913 Its critical apparatus is grounded on the syndicalist form of Marxism, and it is followed up with that relentless logical force which characterises the writings of Karl Marx. Its positive contribution contains several British elements—it envisages the nation rather than a class and it presents an outline of the practical application of syndicalist ideas to British economic life. Its main ideas, negative and positive, contained in *National Guilds* and in the *New Age*, 1912-3, may be summarised as follows :—

For three generations British Labour had been engaged in a struggle for emancipation, but it had never grasped the full meaning of its object. It had not realised that emancipation meant the rescue from oppressed or evil living and the inaugura-

tion of a healthy way of life. The foundation of social life was labour. Hence it followed that if the conditions that governed labour were evil the whole way of life must needs be evil, and that the real emancipation consisted in replacing those conditions by a new scheme of labour. The conditions that had been governing labour formed the wage system or wagery, which was one of the species of the genus slavery. A struggle for emancipation must therefore aim at the abolition of the wage system. Instead of which the working men frittered away their energies on a struggle for higher wages and for the improvement of the wage system of labour. Even the socialists, whether as members of the Social Democratic Federation or of the Fabian Society or of Independent Labour Party, had never fought consistently against the wage system. Some of them even went so far as to deprecate the economic action of Labour and to seek salvation in Parliament—political power should lead to economic power—utterly oblivious of the most salient lesson of history that economics precede politics. The grand experiment in Parliamentary Labourism had been made in the last ten years. In the first flush of satisfaction that followed the general election of 1906, and in consequence of the marked respect paid to the Labour Party at that time, a great number of workmen seriously believed that emancipation was nigh. In the first two sessions of Parliament the Labour representatives were treated with exceptional deference ; in the third session a change manifested itself—the sentiments of the House were distinctly hardening against the Labour Party, and since 1910 they had been practically ignored. The Labour movement outside Parliament had become a much more serious factor than inside. What was the meaning of this transformation ?

In the years from 1900 to 1910, or during the first decade of the history of the Labour Party, in spite of all so-called social reforms and Labour victories on the parliamentary field, profit, interest, rent, cost of living were rising and real wages were falling, and even the rate of the increase of nominal wages fell far short of that of profits. According to the report of the Board of Trade, 1913, giving particulars of rents, retail prices, and wages in 1905 and

1912, prices advanced 13.7 per cent., wages between 2 and 5.5 per cent., while the capitalists increased their income by 22.5 per cent. per annum. This was a period of Labour triumphs in Parliament, a period of Liberal social reform which was claimed by its authors to be unprecedented in the annals of legislation.

The contrast between political triumphs and real failure, with its immediate consequence in the total eclipse of the Labour Party in Parliament, had not taken the syndicalist or guild socialist unawares, for he knew beforehand that Parliament always responded to economic power and ignored economic weakness. If the working class desired political power it must first acquire economic strength in factory, mine, and field. Those who owned and controlled the sources of wealth commanded also the labour which produced the wealth, and in commanding labour they controlled the foundation of society and its political superstructure. Labour could never acquire any power if it left the wage system untouched. This system of remunerating labour was the most potent factor in the upholding of capitalist domination. Wages were not the equivalent of the produce of labour ; they were not paid to workmen as human beings who contributed their quota to the welfare of society, but for the purpose of being able to subsist while the employer exploited their inherent force of labour, just as he exploited a mine, a field, or a river, regardless of the fact that labour possessed the particular quality of vitalising the materials offered by nature to man, rendering them capable of being assimilated by the social body and thus enhancing their value and multiplying wealth. Labour was being bought for a subsistence wage, while all the wealth produced by it went to the employer, so that one-half of the national income was swallowed up by one-fifth of the population. And it was in wealth, in property, that economic power, and with it all political and social power, resided. How, then, could a Parliamentary Labour Party, which failed to assail the wage system, acquire power ? Manifestedly, it could not.

There was only one way to destroy the wage system, and that was the determination of the workman never to sell their labour

for wages. Let the workmen stop spending money on political action and on strikes that aimed merely at mitigating the evils of capitalism ; they should spend it on a great effort to organise themselves as completely as possible and to acquire a monopoly of labour. Trade unionism and manual and mental labour should be co-extensive. There would then be on one side the army of workers in complete possession of living, value-creating labour ; on the other, the capitalist class possessing the dead machinery of production. Such a situation would lead to a deadlock and to a long and arduous struggle, in which the majority, well organised, skilfully led, and completely united, would finally be victorious. The owners of the dead means of production would yield them up to the State for a compensation consisting of a reasonable annuity for two generations. The State, as trustee for the whole community, would then lease the means of production to appropriate guilds, about fifteen in number, covering the vast majority of manual and brain workers. They would produce, administer, and exchange their products, referring all difficulties and questions to a general committee of the federated guilds, elected by the annual congress of the guilds. The nuclei of such guilds already existed—the trade unions. They needed but to concentrate their energies on (a) the organisation of all who work in industrial unions, as a means and as nuclei of guild socialism ; (b) the abolition of the wage system and the vesting of all industrial assets in the State, as the end and aim of unionism.

Before proceeding further with the elaboration of the theories of Guild Socialism, it may be useful to define the nature of a National Guild. This is " a combination of all the labour of every kind, administrative, executive, and productive, in any particular industry. It includes those who work with their brains and those who contribute labour power. Administrators, chemists, skilled and unskilled labour—everybody who can work —all are entitled to membership. Numerically considered, the trade unions must form the bases of these National Guilds ; but they, in their turn, must merge into the greater body." [1]

[1] S. G. Hobson, *Guild Principles in War and Peace*, 1908, p. 26–7.

The theory of guild socialism gained much strength from Cole's new book, *Self-Government in Industry* (1917), which presents an advance on his first book, but also savours of Utopia, as may be gathered from its millennial outlook referred to at the end of this chapter. His *World of Labour* appears to have been a sort of reconnaissance anterior to a general assault on State socialism. His *Self-Government in Industry*, in the chapters dealing with the nature of the State, contains quite original, though fragmentary, views, a full development of which may, at the first blush, make the State of the Social Democrat or Fabian appear quite an obsolete affair.

Differing from the Marxists who hold that the State is but the Executive of the ruling class and that with the overthrow of capitalism the State will disappear, and unlike the Anarchists who, in consonance with the philosophy of the law of nature, think the State as such to be the root of evil, Cole defines the State as the political and governmental institution of the citizens as consumers. The community, whose governmental organisation is the State, consists of a certain number of individuals, inhabiting a certain geographical area; they are, territorially, neighbours to one another, who desire to use and to enjoy all those things that affect them in an equal way as consumers; the State has to see to it that they should be able to satisfy that desire. In municipal life the view of the citizen as a consumer and the rôle of the local government unit as the communal representative of the inhabitants as consumers, are quite evident. The case, argues Cole, is the same with the national State. Parliament, in so far as it is democratic, represents men as users or enjoyers in common, this time on a national instead of a local basis (pp. 71–8). If, then, the State is a sort of an association of the citizens as consumers only, the proper function of which is to safeguard their interests, it can have neither the qualification nor the powers for dealing with the interests of the citizens as producers or as believers. "The State," declares Cole, "is not equally qualified in those matters which affect men differ-

ently according as they are miners or railwaymen, Catholics or Protestants." (p. 79). The question naturally arises: Why should the State be qualified to deal with consumers and not with producers? The answer to this pertinent question, if I understand the author aright, is, that the citizens as consumers have identical interests; they all desire to pursue, without disturbance, their business, to use the means of locomotion, to exchange their services and products, to enjoy the opportunities for worship or entertainments, to satisfy their bodily and mental needs; on the other hand, the citizens as producers or adherents of religious beliefs have by no means identical interests, therefore they cannot have the same organisation or the same machinery for regulating their affairs; as a matter of fact, the citizens as producers are divided into various and diverse groups and have or may have each their own associations, specially qualified to deal with their respective interests. The State thus appears to be really one of the many organisations of the community; it may be the most extensive, but on no account the supreme one. And since economic power controls politics,and the State is a political association, it follows that the State may even be regarded as subordinate to the associations of production. At any rate, the State is not the supreme institution of society. If it is not supreme, " the theory of State sovereignty falls to the ground." The nation, as we see, resolves itself into a certain number of autonomous associations, with their own rights and powers, owing allegiance to nobody but their own members. " In all this diversity of human association, the State can claim an important place, but not a solitary grandeur " (pp. 80–3).

Cole's reasonings on the subject are challenging and suggestive. His point of departure is evidently the Liberal and Nonconformist view of the State as the big policeman, as Lassalle might have said. Its main duty is a negative one—to prevent disturbances and disorders. But, while Liberalism, as the philosophy of the capitalist middle classes, acknowledges State sovereignty in order to have a powerful stick to keep the exploited classes down, Cole, as the advocate of Labour, attempts to divest the State of its sovereignty, thus reopening the old and ever new

controversy between State and Church, State and manor, State and individual, but no more for the purpose of adjudging supremacy to the one or the other. He is rather striving to put all national associations on a footing of equality or to obtain for the National Guild the same rights and powers of which the State has been deemed the only repository. It is a revolutionary theory, and it is catching, too.

Let us now try to apply this theory to the practical problems with which Great Britain has to deal. Stripped of the phraseology of the various Socialist schools, the problem is: How is the economic life of the nation to be arranged, so as to produce an abundance of wealth, social peace, and freedom for all?

With the social reformer the Guild Socialists will have no parley, since all his measures are rendered nugatory by the economic power of the capitalist class. To the Collectivist or State Socialist, the Guildsman will point out that the function of the State is not production, but consumption. And the Syndicalist, who works for the supremacy of the trade union in all matters, is dismissed by them with the remark that the purely industrial sovereign is no advance on a purely political sovereign. What, then, is the solution?

The nation, which, for the purpose of the revolutionary struggle, has been divided into opposing camps of Capital and Labour, will now, with a view to reconstruction, divide into producers and consumers, having each their proper national association. The State should own the means of production; the Guild should control the work of production. The former is to regulate the prices of commodities and, generally, take charge of the interests of the consumers so as to prevent the producers from exploiting the community or dictate to it what it shall consume. State and Guild will form a partnership of equals, "not the revocable concession of a benignant and superior State, and, to make it real, the Guilds must be in a position to bargain on equal terms with the State. The conditions upon which the producers consent to serve and the community to accept their service, must be determined by negotiation between the Guild and the State. The Guild must preserve the right and the

economic resource to withdraw its labour ; the State must rely, to check unjust demands, on its equal voice in the decision of points of difference, and on the organised opinion of the community as a whole" (pp. 109–110, 86–7). In case of conflict between the two associations, "we must look for our ultimate sanction to some body on which all the citizens in their various activities are represented" (p. 87). This division and co-operation of powers implies the establishment of two legislatures—the Guild Congress and Parliament, the former for all matters concerning production, including science and technical education, the latter for all other matters ; there will thus be Guild laws and State laws (pp. 97–8).

The process of production, based on complete self-government of the Guild and thus freed from private and State oppression, will henceforth go on without friction and will yield abundant wealth. Social peace will reign, for, the capitalist class and State bureaucracy being abolished, there can be no antagonism of classes or accumulation of dissatisfaction. And these two facts combined will give the producers freedom at work and at leisure, freedom for self-expression in their handiwork, and instead of the deadening machine drudgery of the wage-slave for the capitalist, there will be the joyful creation of beautiful things by free men for the use of the whole community.[1]

6.—NATIONALISATION AND CONTROL OF INDUSTRY

The first outcome of the social revolutionary ferment has been the demand of organised Labour for the control of industry combined with nationalisation. This demand represents a compromise between social democracy and syndicalism. It is a British product. It began to make itself noticeable during the last war and has been growing in volume and importance. What

[1] *Cf.* A. R. Orage, *An Alphabet of Economics* (T. F. Unwin, London); Cole and Mellor, *The Meaning of National Guilds*, Allen & Unwin, London ; A. J. Penty, *Old Worlds for New ; Id. Guilds and the Social Crisis.* National Guilds League Leaflets, *A Catechism of National Guilds ; Id. A Short Statement of the Principles of the N.G.L. ;* Reckitt and Bechhofer, *The Meaning of National Guilds.*

this demand signifies and how far it has modified the older socialist thought, we shall see presently.

Since the revival of socialism in 1880 till about 1909, the main object and the final goal of all socialist propaganda was nationalisation of the land and the other means of production. This demand was put forward in general terms, few socialists having taken the trouble to define the term nationalisation and its practice. While there was, as a matter of course, a general consensus of opinion that the means of production should be owned by the State as the representative of the nation, socialists, with few exceptions, were not clear or differed on the question as to who should organise and conduct the process of production.

The first trace of this demand, not in the form of a Utopia, but as a practical proposition, is to be found in the revolutionary ferment of 1649, when Peter Chamberlen called for the nationalisation of certain landed properties and mines. The meaning of nationalisation was at that time quite clear; it was in conformity with the principle of the Elizabethan poor law. The Commonwealth was asked to manage, through its officials, the nationalised properties and unearned increments in the interest of the labouring poor, and should assume the duties which employers performed.[1] The authority of the State was still unshaken. It was the Leviathan. The next advocate of nationalisation was Charles Hall, who demanded that the State should be the only legitimate owner of the land and should divide it in equal shares among the farming population or the overwhelming majority of the nation. Hall, however, does not appear to have favoured State management; he but desired that the rents should be paid to the State.[2] The same remarks apply to Bronterre O'Brien's nationalisation programme, which was based on the plan of buying out the landlords and settling the land with farmers who would pay their rents to the State, which, resting on manhood suffrage, would form a Democracy.[3]

From 1882 onwards, the term Nationalisation came into

[1] See *supra*, Part I., p. 72–73. [2] See *supra*, Part II., p. 130.

[3] See *supra*, Part III., p. 20; *cf.* Bronterre O'Brien, *Rise of Human Slavery*, 1885, pp. 118, 128.

popular use. In that year, Alfred Russel Wallace published his treatise *Nationalisation of the Land*, and H. M. Hyndman republished Spence's Newcastle lecture and gave it the title *Nationalisation of the Land*, although Spence would have demurred to it, since he desired to see the communes the owners of the land, and not the State. Wallace distinctly declared that he only desired to see the State as landlord, but not as manager of agriculture.[1] Hyndman and his organisations, the Democratic Federation and the Social Democratic Federation, were evidently not clear as to the meaning and scope of nationalisation. In their various programmes, published between 1881 and 1885, nationalisation was used both in the meaning of State ownership and management as well as ownership only. The S.D.F. programme used also the term "Socialisation," meaning, however, "control by a Democratic State." Indeed, the Social Democratic knew no difference between nationalisation and socialisation.[2] The clearest definition of nationalisation was given by the Fabian Society, who declared that "socialism means the organisation and conduct of the necessary industries of the country . . . by the nation as a whole, through the most suitable public authorities, parochial, municipal, provincial, or central."[3] The Independent Labour Party and the Labour Party, in matters of theory, were dependent either on the Fabian Society or the writings of J. Ramsay MacDonald, who, as we have seen, were State socialists. Control of industry by Labour was not thought of. The control of the Democratic State and municipality by the voters was believed to constitute an adequate safeguard against oppressive measures on the part of the managing authorities.

The agitation of revolutionary trade unionists and adherents of direct action, as well as the propaganda of the guild socialists and the activities of the Webbs since about 1910, have changed the concept of nationalisation and the tenets of State socialism The demand for the control of industry by the workers them-

[1] See *supra*, p. 268. [2] See *supra*, p. 285.

[3] Fabian Society, *Report to the International Socialist Congress*, London, 1896.

selves, through shop committees and industrial councils, has been rapidly popularised. Nationalisation and State socialism have come to be regarded as another, and by no means better form of capitalism, unless combined with joint control of industry by organised Labour, "both in relation to workshop management and the question of discipline."[1] The last war, which strengthened the revolutionary movements all over the world, contributed a great deal to the rapid popularisation of the demand for the control of industry. The shop steward movement is partly the expression of this demand. The Clyde strike in February, 1915, was the first manifestation of the new spirit. The strike committee turned into a workers' committee, and this model was imitated in other industrial towns; workers' committees and shop steward committees took the place of the old trade union executives and formed the centres of the extensive strike movements in 1917. The Clyde strikers, the pioneers of the new economic organisation of the proletariate, were largely under the influence of the leaders of the Socialist Labour Party, who, as it has been shown on the preceding pages, are adherents of revolutionary trade unionism or of the primacy of economic action.[2]

The importance of the new demand is shown by the partial and reluctant recognition it found in the Whitley Report upon Works Committees (Cd. 9001) and the Garton Foundation *Memorandum on the Industrial Situation after the War*.[3] The Whitley Report recommended the co-operation of employers and employed in certain workshop matters, and the Garton Memorandum proposed the establishment of joint boards composed of representatives of the employers' associations and the trade

[1] G. D. H. Cole, *Introduction to Trade Unionism*, p. 99.

[2] *Cf.* J. T. Murphy, *A Workers' Committee*, Sheffield, 1918; William Paul, *The State*, 1919; both authors are prominent writers of the S.L.P.

[3] For a socialist criticism of the Whitley Report see J. T. Murphy, *Compromise or Independence?* Sheffield, 1918; *Labour Year Book*, London, 1919, pp. 253–256. On the Garton *Memorandum* see S. G. Hobson, *Guild Principles in War and Peace*, 1918, pp. 76–126 (Bell & Sons).

unions. But, while the authors of those reports, having had mainly in view the reconstruction of the economic life after the war, may have regarded their proposals as an industrial expediency rather than a new social principle, the Trades' Union Congresses since 1915 onwards have taken up the question of control in the sense of a forward move of Labour towards a higher conception of social justice. At the Bristol T.U. Congress (1915), on the motion of the Post Office Associations, the following resolution was carried unanimously :—" This Congress expresses the opinion that nationalisation of public services is not necessarily advantageous to the employed and the working classes unless accompanied by steadily increasing democratic control, both by the employed and the Parliamentary representatives of Labour." At the Birmingham T.U. Congress (1916), the chairman, Harry Gosling, in his opening speech, inveighed against industrial autocracy and, in demanding for Labour a share in the management of the workshop, declared that industrial democracy was the only means to social peace. The same Congress called upon the Government to nationalise the railways and to grant to the trade unions concerned " such a share in the management of the railway system as will enable the railway workers to have a real voice in the control of the conditions of their life and work." The National Union of Railwaymen demanded, in 1917, that the nationalised railways shall be jointly controlled and managed by the State and the railwaymen's representatives. A similar demand was put forward by the Annual Conference of the Miners Federation in 1918, when the following resolution was carried :— " The time has arrived in the history of the coal mining industry when it is clearly in the national interests to transfer the entire industry from private ownership and control to State ownership, with joint control and administration by the workmen and the State." The Nationalisation of Mines and Minerals Bill, 1919, drafted by the Miners' Federation, was based on the same principle : the State and Labour as joint managers of the mining industry. Thus, the demand for nationalisation and control of industry has been the positive outcome of the turmoil of the last ten years.

XIX

LABOUR IN POLITICS

I.—ACHIEVEMENTS OF PARLIAMENTARY ACTION

THE economic action of Labour is the soil of revolutionary ideas ; it touches the elemental divergences of the classes in modern society ; it is apt to pit power against power ; it vibrates with the very life and its struggles for advance and renovation, and runs full tilt against traditional forms of thought and speech. In leaving its heated atmosphere for Parliamentary action, we soon find ourselves again connected with the chain of continuity and in the midst of peaceable discussions, in familiar terms, concerning improvement of conditions, removal of grievances, and introduction of reform measures. The contrast is striking. And we shall realise it presently.

The reform measures of the Liberals (1906–1913), as expressed in the Trade Disputes Act, 1906, Workmen's Compensation Act, 1907, Old-Age Pension Act, 1908, Miners' Eight Hours Act, 1908, Trade Boards Act, 1909, National Insurance Act, 1911, Coal Mines Act, 1912, Parliament Act, 1912, and Trade Union Act, 1913, naturally weakened the independence of the Parliamentary Labour Party and exposed it to the criticism of the syndicalists and revolutionary socialists. The Party, composed of Labour-Liberals, social reformers, democrats, and socialists, could not help abandoning its opposition to a Liberal Government which year after year put some reform measure on the Statute Book. Although the various Acts mentioned above were sharply assailed by the revolutionary elements of the socialist Labour movement, many trade union leaders regarded them as beneficial to the working class and would have disapproved of any serious opposition on the part of the Labour representatives in

Parliament. And it can hardly be doubted that the reforms enacted in the years from 1907 to 1913 resulted in an improvement of the condition of Labour. There are some statistical data on this point which may be quoted. Sir Hugh Bell, in a speech addressed to the shareholders of Bell Brothers (Limited), on April 9, 1914, gave the following illustrations :—

" Going back twenty years to 1893, the Cleveland miners earned 25s. 3d. per week and lost 10½ per cent. of their time. Ten years later the figures stood, earnings 30s. 1d., time lost 13½ per cent. In 1913, earnings 34s. 9d., time lost 16¼ per cent.

" With regard to the tons per man, the question is complicated by various circumstances. In the first place, the stone being more distant from the face and poorer in quality, and consequently requiring cleaning, involves the employment of a larger number of off-hand men in proportion to the actual number of miners. On the other hand, very considerable improvements in mining implements have taken place within the twenty years. Bearing these facts in mind the following table is very significant and worthy of consideration :—

	Tons worked per actual miners employed.	A fall of Per cent.	Tons worked per man of total number employed.	A fall of Per cent.
1893 ..	1,848	—	912	—
1903 ..	1,740	5·84	793	13·04
1913 ..	1,516	17·96	671	26·42

" You will note that wages have gone up from 25s. 3d. in 1893 to 34s. 9d. in 1913, or say upwards of 35 per cent., while the time lost has increased more than 50 per cent.—viz., from 10½ per cent. to 16¼ per cent. . . . In 1899 we were at the beginning of that process of social reform (as it is called) which has made such remarkable progress in the fifteen years which have elapsed. From that year legislation for the advantage, not of the community generally, but of individuals in your employment, began to take great proportions. As instances of what I mean I may mention the Workmen's Compensation Act and the Insurance Act. In 1899 we paid £1,229 in compensation, and there were no other items to compare with the other five

items I am going to mention. In 1913 we paid for workmen's compensation £7,566, and the figure still grows. In respect of workmen's insurance, comparatively a recent piece of legislation, the full extent of which we are only beginning to feel, we paid £3,836. In the way of mining Acts, the Eight Hours Act was passed in 1908, very much against the better judgment of the miners and mine-owners in the counties of Northumberland and Durham, and in spite of their strong representations to the contrary. It cost us last year £7,949. The Rescue and Aid Act cost us £319. The Coal Mines Act of 1911 cost us £7,583, the Minimum Wage Act £3,130. These figures total £30,383. Add to this £30,383 the increase in local rates amounting to £10,680 and you get upwards of £41,000 added to the cost of production. The figures are even more striking if I reduce them to the ton of pig iron. In 1899 the total of these amounts represented 6d. per ton on our make of pig iron and in 1913 2s. 5d. per ton, a most serious change in the position of matters." [1]

These and similar improvements which have resulted from the long series of Labour and Factory legislation enabled the working classes to build up formidable organisations, to form industrial alliances, and to conceive far-reaching plans for the future. Their whole standard of life, material, moral, and intellectual, has risen. Index numbers of the rise of the cost of living do but touch one side of human life, and not even the most important one, since they are not directly concerned with the movement of moral values.

The charge levelled, in 1908–1913, against the Labour Party of having had a political *entente* with the Liberals was not baseless. Of the thirty-nine members then composing the Parliamentary Labour, the majority had been elected with the assistance of Liberal votes. The weaning of Labour from Liberalism was a long and painful process.

The weakest point of Labour is their journalism. From October, 1912, the Labour Party had an organ of its own, the *Daily Citizen*, published in Manchester and London, and edited by Frank Dilnot. It was mainly a trade union political paper

[1] *Times*, June 23, 1914.

skilfully defending the interests of the workpeople in their disputes with the employers. In politics it stood for democracy, in industrial matters for social reform, but it was not well supported by the labouring masses. It finally stopped publication at the beginning of June, 1915. It left no gap, for it had no distinctive feature of its own.

During the last war, Parliamentary Labour assisted in putting on the Statute Book some of those hardy annuals or long-standing resolutions of the Trade Union Congresses and Labour Party Conferences, notably concerning the creation of a Ministry of Labour, agricultural minimum wages, and democratisation of the suffrage. The Ministry of Labour (December, 1916) is destined to form, earlier or later, the statistical and research centre for all questions touching socialisation ; the importance of this office depends on the capacity and views of its holder. The agricultural minimum wages (July, 1917) have already raised the standard of life of a class of workers who, left to themselves, could do very little to improve their condition and status. The Representation of the People Act (February, 1918) has all but completed the democratic revolution, initiated in 1688, demonstrated for at Peterloo, 1819, and fervently striven for by the Chartists. The century between Peterloo and the last suffrage Act tells an impressive tale of the rise of Labour. The same remark applies to the attitude of the ruling classes towards Labour during the Napoleonic Wars and the last war. A century ago the working classes, treated as helots, were forbidden to volunteer ; in the years 1915–1918 the representatives of Labour were Cabinet Ministers, members of Government, official envoys, and controllers of the nation's food. At the formation of the Coalition Government (May, 1915), Arthur Henderson, the leader of the Labour Party in the House of Commons, was appointed President of the Board of Education, William Brace (miners) Under-Secretary at the Home Office, and G. H. Roberts (compositors) Junior Lord of the Treasury. In December, 1916, at the reorganisation of the Government, with Lloyd George as Prime Minister, Arthur Henderson entered the War Cabinet, John Hodge (steel smelters) became the first

Minister of Labour. In the summer, 1917, Henderson was sent to Russia as special envoy, carrying with him the contingent appointment as British ambassador, but having found in Petrograd his Damascus, resigned office, which was then taken by George N. Barnes (engineers). Finally, in July, 1918, J. R. Clynes (gas workers) was appointed Food Controller. This triumphant political march of Labour has been mainly the effect of the industrial development of the nineteenth century. How prophetic were the words of that Conservative writer who, in 1826, declared: "The age which now discloses itself to the view promises to be the age of industry . . . and the age of the people."[1] It rendered all those democratic achievements possible, aye, necessary.

2.—ATTITUDE TOWARDS FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THE WAR

In all questions of foreign relations and war and peace, the organised working class has followed the tradition of Mid-Victorian Radicalism, striving for peace, international good-will, disarmament and arbitration, denouncing armaments and war-diplomacy, and demonstrating in favour of oppressed nationalities. Jean Jaurès used to speak with pride of the action of British working class leaders in fraternising, during the Fashoda crisis (1898), with the French trade unionists.[2] In 1903 the Labour Party joined the International Socialist Bureau. A few years later, when the relations between the German and British Governments entered a critical stage, British working class delegations visited Germany and German delegations attended British Trades Union and Labour Party Congresses. The Parliamentary Labour Party watched with growing apprehension the fatal development of the tension between the two nations. On the XII. Annual Conference of the Labour Party, held in the last week of January, 1912, at Birmingham, the subjoined resolution was carried.

[1] *Cf. supra*, Part II., p. 283.

[2] For similar remarks compare Renaudel's speech in London, June, 1918, reproduced in *Report of the 18th Annual Conference of the Labour Party*, London, 1918, p. 55.

"That this Conference, believing the anti-German policy pursued in the name of the British Government by Sir Edward Grey to be a cause of increasing armaments, international ill-will, and the betrayal of oppressed nationalities, protests in the strongest terms against it. The Conference is of opinion that this diplomacy has led the present Government to risk a war with Germany in the interest of French financiers over Morocco, to condone the Italian outrage in Tripoli, the Russian theft in Mongolia, and in joining hands with Russia in making an assault on the independence of Persia." [1]

These were the views which animated the Party up to the first week of August, 1914. Ramsay MacDonald, the chairman of the Parliamentary Party, replying to Sir Edward Grey's memorable statements of August 3, 1914, on the general European situation, strongly urged that everything should be done to preserve British neutrality. On August 7 the Executive Committee of the Labour Party issued the following letter to its constituent bodies :—

"We beg to inform you that a special meeting of the National Executive of the Labour Party was held on August 5 and 6, to consider the European crisis, when it was decided to forward to each of the affiliated organisations the following resolutions :—

"That the conflict between the nations of Europe in which this country is involved is owing to Foreign Ministers pursuing diplomatic policies for the purpose of maintaining a balance of power ; that our national policy of understanding with France and Russia only was bound to increase the power of Russia, both in Europe and Asia, and to endanger good relations with Germany. Further, that Sir Edward Grey, as proved by the facts which he gave to the House of Commons, committed, without the knowledge of our people, the honour of the country to support France in the event of any war in which she was seriously involved, and gave definite assurances of support, before the House of Commons had any chance of considering the matter.

"That the Labour movement reiterates the fact that it has

[1] *Report of the XIIth Annual Conference of the Labour Party*, London, 1912, p. 98.

opposed the policy which has produced the war, and that its duty is now to secure peace at the earliest possible moment on such conditions as will provide the best opportunities for the re-establishment of amicable feelings between the workers of Europe.

"That without in any way receding from the position that the Labour movement has taken in opposition to our engaging in a European war, the Executive of the Party advises that . . . . all Labour and socialist organisations should concentrate their energies meantime upon the task of carrying the resolutions . . . detailing measures to be taken to mitigate the destitution which will inevitably overtake our working people while the state of war lasts."

On August 7 the Party decided to make no pronouncement on the vote of credit, whereupon Ramsay MacDonald resigned the chairmanship, and Arthur Henderson took his place. It may be said that from that day onwards the Party rallied to the support of the cause of the Allies with practical unanimity, the few dissentients making hardly any impression on the political life of Labour. On August 24, 1914, an industrial truce was declared by a resolution passed in a meeting of representatives of the trades unions and the Labour Party, which recommended "that an immediate effort be made to terminate all existing trade disputes, and whenever new points of difficulty arise during the war period a serious attempt should be made by all concerned to reach an amicable settlement before resorting to a strike or lock-out." The truce was fairly kept till 1917, when both an extensive strike and peace movement made themselves noticeable in the ranks of Labour owing largely to the news of the Russian Revolution. That, none the less, the ranks were not broken was mostly due to the social reform activities of the War Emergency National Workers Committee appointed by a Special Conference of the various Labour organisations which took place, on the invitation of the Labour Party Secretary, on August 5th, 1914. The Committee pursued both critical and constructive aims. It formulated and pressed upon Government and municipal authorities carefully worked out measures for the

protection of the labouring population against food speculators, rent-racking, evictions, unemployment, underfeeding of school children, in short, against the vicissitudes and hardships which the war might bring in its train and unduly aggravate the conditions of the have-nots. The Committee met, at first, several times weekly, then weekly and fortnightly, and dealt, besides, with military allowances and pensions, import of wheat, distribution of shipping, war finance, and labour problems after the war. The Committee included all sections of the movement, moderate reformers and left wingers, adherents of war policy as well as pacifists. Discussions on military policy and purely trade union questions were, however, ruled out of consideration. Arthur Henderson was its first chairman, and after his joining the Coalition Government he was succeeded by Robert Smillie. J. S. Middleton, Assistant Secretary of the Labour Party, acted throughout as secretary. But the constructive brain of the Committee was Sidney Webb, who for the first time came into actual contact with the inner workings of the Labour movement ; owing to his proposals the Committee was constantly ahead of Government policy on all social measures affecting the daily life of the civilian population. Throughout the period of the war the Committee served as a direct channel of communication with the various local bodies of the country, and, therefore, as the centripetal force which kept the working class from splitting up into opposing sections, despite the growing differences of opinion as to war policy, Munition Acts, Peace, etc. The consequence was that by 1918 the Labour Party, unlike most socialist and working class Parties in Europe and America, remained united and was in the right frame of mind to respond to the necessity of its being reorganised into a Socialist Labour Party, setting up of individual members' section, developing the women's side of the Party. and taking the lead in the Socialist and Labour International

XX

REORGANISATIONS OF THE SOCIALIST PARTIES

I.—THE BRITISH SOCIALIST PARTY

THE unrest which overtook Labour since 1908, caught also the various socialist bodies. The Social Democratic Federation (S.D.F.) was seething with discontent some years before. In 1903 several Scottish branches seceded, in 1905 some London branches followed suit and formed separate organisations. The leaders of the S.D.F., trying to exorcise the spirit of unrest, changed in 1908 the name of their organisation to Social Democratic Party (S.D.P.). Even in the ranks of the I.L.P. much dissatisfaction was manifested with the alleged complicity of the I.L.P. leaders with the spiritless attitude of the Parliamentary Labour Party towards the Government. Several branches of the I.L.P. seceded and entered into communication with the S.D.P. and other dissatisfied socialists, notably of the *Clarion* group, and in their confabulations conceived the idea of forming a new socialist party. In 1909 a committee for socialist representation was formed in Manchester, who gradually succeeded in convening a large conference with a view to forming a united socialist party. This conference took place on September 30 and October 1, 1911, in Manchester, and the British Socialist Party (B.S.P.) was called into being. In the last week of May, 1912, the B.S.P. held its first annual conference in Manchester and adopted a programme which was partly social democratic and partly revolutionary trade unionist. The old traditions and the old leaders proved too strong for the new spirit to assert itself. The B.S.P. was substantially the old S.D.F., or the old S.D.P.

When the war came, the B.S.P., like most socialist parties of

the belligerent countries, hauled down the red flag. Its policy consisted, at first, of vague affirmations of internationalism, rather more definite denunciations of Prussian militarism, and a quite decided insistence on an immediate policy to ensure the proper supply of food and the alleviation of distress caused by the war. Gradually, however, opinions in the Party consolidated into two main groups. One, led by H. M. Hyndman, Dan Irving, H. W. Lee, and the older members, took up a definitely patriotic attitude, affirmed the necessity for national defence and the "will to victory," while still maintaining a critical attitude towards the Government in all its dealings. The other section, whose opinions were voiced by E. C. Fairchild, John Maclean, A. A. Watts, and the Secretary, Albert Inkpen, declared for an international agreement between the workers of all lands to end the war at the earliest possible moment. It declared its belief that the war was the inevitable outcome of modern capitalist development in the mad race for markets, and that all the Powers were equally responsible for its outbreak. In the early part of 1915 a number of divisional conferences were held at which each of the two sections struggled to obtain mastery, but without definite result. But at a National Party Congress, held at Salford at Easter, 1916 (the first since the war), the crisis came to a head. The feeling among the delegates was so obviously and overwhelmingly against the "will to victory" section that, on a minor matter of procedure, about 20 delegates representing that section, including H. M. Hyndman, withdrew from the Conference, and eventually from the Party. It should be said that the Executive of the Party had been acutely divided on main principles right away through 1915, the internationalists being in a majority of one. It had been decided, for instance, much against the wishes of the Hyndman section, to send a delegate to the first Zimmerwald Conference.[1] The proposal fell

[1] The first International Conference of Revolutionary Socialists during the war took place in the first week of September, 1915, at Zimmerwald (Switzerland). Delegates were present from Germany, France, Italy, Russia, Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, Sweden, Norway, Holland, and Switzerland. The most prominent among them were

through, however, owing to the refusal of passports by the Government, but a referendum of the branches subsequently endorsed a resolution expressing the adherence of the B.S.P. to the Zimmerwald platform.

From the Salford Conference onwards, the B.S.P. was definitely ranged with the left wing of what remained of the Socialist International. The secession of Hyndman, Thorne, Bax, and others did not materially affect its strength. They were the better known names, it is true, but not the really virile elements of the Party. Lesser known men stepped into their places. Tom Quelch (son of Harry Quelch) wielded a trenchant pen in the columns of *The Call*, which had been started as the official organ of the Party, after the defection of the privately-owned *Justice* to the ranks of the secessionists.

On the outbreak of the second Russian revolution (November, 1917), which brought Lenin and Trotsky into power, the B.S.P. definitely ranged itself on the side of the revolutionary working class and peasantry in Russia, organised under the banner of the Bolsheviks. From that attitude it never swerved. At its Easter Conference in 1918 a message of appreciation was read from M. Litvinoff, at that time acting as Bolshevik plenipotentiary in Britain, and the whole Conference was solidly behind the new régime. Later in the year, John Maclean, an Executive member, who had already served a sentence of eighteen months' imprisonment for anti-war propaganda, was sentenced to three years' penal servitude, largely because of his enthusiastic advocacy of the Bolshevik cause. The 1919 conference at Sheffield still further emphasised the pro-Bolshevik attitude of the B.S.P. It declared that "the world war is bound to give birth to a world revolution, in which the hitherto exploited and oppressed classes in all countries would seize the reins of power, overthrow the rule of the capitalist and landlord classes, establish the direct

Lenin, Ledebour, Bourderon, Merrheim, Modigliani, Lazzari Racovski, and Höglund. They declared themselves for an immediate peace without annexations and indemnities, for the self-determination of the nationalities, against the industrial truce, and for the revolutionary class war.

rule of the workers and peasants by means of Soviets, and wind up the capitalist order of society." A referendum of the Party was taken on the question of adhesion to the Third (Communist) International, established at Moscow. By an overwhelming majority (only four branches dissenting) it was decided to secede from the Second and join up with the Third International. The B.S.P. is definitely in favour of Sovietism as a form of government to supersede capitalist parliamentary democracy. But it adheres to the parliamentary weapon in its prosecution of the class struggle. It is prepared, indeed, to use any weapon available as occasion demands or exigencies determine. It does not expect the social revolution through Parliament, but regards it as a point of vantage from which to attack the capitalist system.

Just before the outbreak of the war, the B.S.P., which for over twelve years, under various names, had remained outside the Labour Party, decided to reaffiliate to that body. This affiliation took actual effect at the Annual Conference of the Labour Party in Manchester in 1917, and since that time the B.S.P., with the assistance of many local trades councils and labour parties, has constituted the revolutionary left wing of the Labour Party. At the General Election of November, 1918, the B.S.P. had some twenty-five parliamentary candidates running under Labour Party auspices. None were successful, but all polled as well as, and some of them considerably better than, the average Labour Party candidate.

It is, however, doubtful whether the B.S.P. has definitely shed those fissiparous tendencies which marked the career of its predecessors, the S.D.F. and the S.D.P., for it can hardly be assumed that the whole Party is in favour of the Soviet system.

2.—THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST PARTY

Upon the secession from the B.S.P., Hyndman, William Thorne, Dan Irving, Hunter Watts, H. W. Lee, J. Jones, John Stokes, and Joseph Burgess (formerly I.L.P.), formed the National Socialist Party. Their organ is the old weekly *Justice*. Hyndman, who, as Parliamentary candidate, had for so many

years nursed Burnley, had the satisfaction to see his friend and disciple, Dan Irving, elected as member for that constituency at the general election in December, 1918. Also "Colonel" William Thorne and J. Jones were successful, so that the young and small Party was represented in the House of Commons by three members. The Party is affiliated to the Labour Party.

3.—THE INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY

In the years of unrest, the I.L.P. went through a severe crisis. In 1913 the Party appeared to have weathered the storm. Its "Coming of Age" conference at Bradford, April, 1914, was attended by fraternal delegates from abroad as well as by delegates of the Labour Party, the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress, the Co-operative Societies, the Fabian Society, and the British Socialist Party, as a recognition of the work of the I.L.P. At that time, seven of its nominees, J. R. Clynes, Keir Hardie, F. W. Jowett, Ramsay MacDonald, James Parker, Tom Richardson, and Philip Snowden sat in Parliament as part of the thirty-nine members constituting the Parliamentary Labour Party. It was a well-merited tribute to the achievements and inspiration of the I.L.P.

During the first years of the last war, the Party, owing to its pacifist attitude, suffered an eclipse, the effects of which manifested themselves in the general election in December, 1918, when even its most prominent members, Philip Snowden, J. Ramsay MacDonald, and F. W. Jowett, lost their seats. As a compensation for the losses, the Party gained four new Parliamentary representatives, Ben G. Spoor (Bishop Auckland), Neil Maclean (Govan), W. Graham (Edinburgh), and Tom Myers (Spen Valley). Since 1918 the membership increased to a very considerable extent, the Party having become the refuge of all those men and women of influence, reputation, and learning, who had lost faith in the Liberal Party and who would like to see humanity and righteousness the foundation stones of government.

In 1910, under the auspices of the Party, a printing and publishing agency, the National Labour Press, Ltd., was estab-

lished in Manchester, which has proved a growing and profitable concern. The Labour Press publishes the *Labour Leader*, the official weekly organ of the party. It is also responsible for the publication of the *Socialist Review* (quarterly), edited by J. R. MacDonald. In 1905 the party inaugurated the publication of a socialist library, which includes the following volumes : Ferri, *Socialism and Positive Science* ; MacDonald, *Socialism and Society* ; Jaures, *Studies in Socialism* ; Oliver, *White Capital and Coloured Labour* ; Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism* ; MacMillan, *The Child and the State* ; K. Kautsky, *Dictatorship of the Proletariat* ; Bruce Glasier, *Meaning of Socialism*. Various party writers, notably Sir Leo Money and E. D. Morel, have been publishing, from time to time, instructive pamphlets on the questions of the day.

The questions of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the Soviet form of government, which have been agitating some portions of British Labour and socialism, occupied the attention of the I.L.P. at the end of 1919, and it dealt with them in a *Memorandum*, explaining its attitude towards them. The party had to record a decline of the authority of Parliament in Great Britain, owing—

" (*a*) To the fact that the Conservative reactionaries supported the threatened rebellion in Ulster against Parliament in 1913–14 ;

" (*b*) To the deterioration of politics in Great Britain under the influence of Mr. Lloyd George, as was seen at the election in December, 1918 ;

" (*c*) To the predominance of the Executive, especially since the war, and the corresponding refusal of the House of Commons to discuss important questions concerning the welfare of the country ;

" (*d*) From the point of view of democracy, the most serious result is that the House of Commons is now felt to respond too slowly to the real needs and wishes of the nation, and some of the more hasty spirits amongst the working class, which in its workshops and at its firesides continues to experience its economic and other grievances, are disposed to turn to " direct action and other forms of extra-Parliamentary pressure for protection."

The real cause of the decline of Parliamentary government or democracy was to be looked for not in any inherent weakness of Parliamentarism, but in the insufficient education of the people and the imperfect state of socialist propaganda. The efforts of the socialist must therefore be directed towards removing that cause. Given persistent and systematic education and propaganda, democracy would work well, even in the transition time from capitalism to socialism. A revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat, therefore, need not be necessary, " but whether it has to be resorted to or not depends solely upon the policy of the capitalists themselves and not upon the political necessities of Socialism. Socialists ought not to allow capitalist interests and designs to divert Socialist propaganda and methods. That in most politically democratic countries will only strengthen the hands of the reaction, and in countries well equipped with modern military weapons will only lead to massacre not to revolution."

The party rejected, likewise, the Soviet system, for the conditions under which it had been established in Russia were abnormal and the system itself had not reached yet any finality. Therefore, the party saw no reason for departing from its old position that until socialist propaganda influenced public opinion and until socialists were chosen as representatives on public bodies, no secure foundation for the socialist State could be laid.

As to " direct action," the party was of opinion that neither economic action nor parliamentary action alone could do the work which socialism demanded ; both were necessary, and each must be given its proper place in a full attack all along the line by democracy upon capitalism. The party was of opinion " that direct action for political purposes is essentially different in its nature from direct action for industrial purposes, and that the risks of failure of the former are so great that its political practicability is slight. The threats and fears of direct action, taken along with a general state of working class unsettlement such as exists to-day, do, however, contribute materially to the influences which curb the policy of reactionary governments. The party, therefore, rejects direct action as a substitute for Parlia-

mentary action, but considers it as one of the several weapons which the reaction may compel the working classes to use. Thus used it may be regarded as a means of restoring representative government and not of destroying it."

4.—THE SOCIALIST LABOUR PARTY

The Scottish members of the S.D.F., who seceded in 1903, formed, after the model of the American Socialist Party, an organisation of their own which was practically but a branch of the American Party. For the first eight years its activities were mainly propagandist and limited to spreading the class war doctrines of Marx, according to the interpretation of Daniel De Leon. They denounced, in the style of their master, all other working class organisations, both socialist and trade union, as " non-militant " and " non-class-conscious," and their leaders as " fakirs " ; they refused to be mixed up with those bulwarks of capitalism ; they indicted industrialism from the point of view of the Labour theory of value. It was an abstract agitation which had little relation to the actual conditions in Great Britain. After 1911 its members, caught by the general unrest and militant tactics of Labour, began to be active in strikes and thus to grapple with realities ; they mixed with the trade unions and deviated from the rigidity of their earlier views. During the first year of the war, several of their members, knowing the theory of direct action, became shop stewards in the engineering industry, and to them must largely be credited the Clyde strike in February, 1915, the strike in March, 1916, when several shop stewards were deported from the Clyde, finally, the great engineering turn-out in May, 1917.

The S.L.P., well versed in Marx's materialist conception of history, had no difficulty in recognising the economic motives of the last war and regarding it as the extreme expression of the industrial and maritime competition between Great Britain and Germany. Their members were all anti-war. At the general election in December, 1918, three candidates were put forward—Arthur MacManus, J. T. Murphy, and William Paul—and each polled several thousand votes.

The S.L.P. theories came nearest to those of Lenin and Trotsky. The triumphs of the Bolshevik revolution gave, naturally, much encouragement to the S.L.P. Its organ is the *Socialist*, and its views dominate more or less such papers as the *Worker*, *Solidarity*, and the East London *Workers' Dreadnought*, while the Central Labour College shows much affinity with the S.L.P., and there is hardly any difference between the latter and the B.S.P.

5.—VARIOUS ORGANISATIONS

The London secessionists from the S.D.F. in 1905, with Fitzgerald at the head, formed the Socialist Party of Great Britain. It was very active in spreading Marxist theories and it opposed all other political parties, no matter whether they were calling themselves socialist or Labour. It emphasised the importance of proletarian political action on strictly social revolutionary lines. Its organ is the *Socialist Standard*.

The Socialist Sunday School movement, for which A. P. Hazell, one of the oldest members of the S.D.F. and one of the best students of Marxist economics in England, had done much, contributed a good deal towards the propaganda of socialism. The *Young Socialist*, founded by Archibald Russell at Glasgow, was the special organ of the Socialist Sunday schools.

The youngest socialist organisation is the National Guilds League. It was founded in 1915, with William Mellor as secretary. It is mainly a propagandist body and looks less for numbers than for effective writers and speakers in sympathy with guild socialism. Among its several members may be mentioned Bertrand Russell, R. H. Tawney, Clifford Allen, George Lansbury, W. N. Ewer, Mrs. Townshend, H. J. Gillespie. The League has published a number of ably written pamphlets on the guild idea, based on Marxist economics, the best among them being *A Catechism of National Guilds*.

On the whole, the educational activities of the socialist, industrial unionists, and guildsmen immediately before the war and in 1918 and 1919, were on an unprecedented scale. Moreover, they were able to reach the organised working classes. The formation of the Labour Party in 1900 by trade unionists

and socialists rendered it possible for intellectuals to come in touch with the mass of trade unionists. Something like an alliance between Labour and social knowledge was established. These activities and developments, combined with the effects of the war, the Russian revolution, and the Representation of the People Act, led to a recasting of the Labour Party constitution and to a revision of its aims and objects.

XXI

REORGANISATION OF THE LABOUR PARTY

I.—CAUSES OF THE REORGANISATION

The Labour Party consisted, up to the beginning of 1918, of bodies of the best organised wage-workers, with a slight admixture of middle class socialists. At party gatherings and conferences, the socialists as such played no part whatever ; in the deliberations and councils of Labour their voices were scarcely heard. Indeed, the Labour Party conferences were little else than second and by no means improved editions of the trades union congresses. Cotton and coal controlled both. The constitution of the party was limited to the formation of a separate Parliamentary representation, with no other programme than the hardy annuals transmitted from one annual conference to the other. The Labour Party was an extended Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress.

The social revolutionary ferment, with its symptomatic unrest and strike fever, and the fiery cataclysm which shook Europe for the last years and laid bare the foundations of modern civilisation, rendered a reconstruction of society necessary and prompted the leading minds of the working classes to make the Labour Party the political instrument of that reconstruction. For, as Marx taught, the time must needs arrive when the class struggle turns into a political struggle—political, not only in the narrow meaning of Parliamentarism, but in its true, Greek meaning of social—of all matters concerning the constitution of society. That this work of reconstruction could only proceed on socialist lines, few contested, since the whole evolution of economic life tended in that direction. Individualism was dead, and its organ, the Liberal Party, was decaying, while the other parties

had no other remedies but digging up the skeletons of past policies and clinging to shattered idols. Moreover, the last war turned the State into the largest producing and distributive agency of the nation; the Government controlled, directly or indirectly, production and distribution. It revealed, further, the enormous wealth of modern society and showed that poverty was altogether an unnecessary and preventible evil. "The real cause of the manifest unrest among the workers in connection with social matters," declared a moderate Labour leader in 1918, "was the recognition by the working classes of the causes of their misery and degradation. While they used to be content when told that any reform costing a few millions a year would mean bankruptcy to the State, the most ignorant people now understood that if the State could spend eight millions a day on the destruction of humanity, they could at least find some millions for the reconstruction of humanity." [1]

For the reconstruction on socialist lines, the Labour Party stood in need of social economic knowledge. And there were men and women with that knowledge, middle class intellectuals, who had cut themselves adrift from their class and sought admission to the Labour Party, but whose strait gate did not allow them to enter freely, since the old constitution of the Labour Party has been made mainly for manual workers. Things shaped themselves as Marx foresaw when he declared that "in times when the class struggle is nearing the decisive hour . . . a portion of the middle class ideologists, those who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole, joins the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands." [2] To allow them to join the Labour Party and supply the necessary knowledge to the proper instrument of reconstruction, a reorganisation or a new constitution of the Labour Party was necessary. The need was all the more imperative as the democratisation of the

[1] Labour Party, *Report of the 18th Annual Conference*, London, June, 1918, p. 43 (speech by J. H. Thomas, M.P.).

[2] Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, English edition, 1888, p. 14.

suffrage extended the basis of party life to the limits of the nation. The whole British nation became sovereign. The political programme of Chartism was now the law of the land, and it was henceforth the mission of the grandsons of the Chartists to take in hand the " ulterior motives " [1] of their grandfathers.

2.—THE ESSENTIALS OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION

In August of the memorable year 1917, the Labour Party appointed a sub-committee to prepare a scheme of reorganisation. The work was soon taken in hand, the constitution drafted and submitted to the Labour Party Special Conference on February 26, 1918, which adopted it. The gates of the party were thrown open to the intellectual proletariat, and the British working classes given a socialist programme. Sidney Webb, in his commentary on the aims and objects of the reorganised Party, heads the last chapter with the apophthegm " More light—but also more warmth ! " [2] While, in 1896, he told the London International Socialist and Labour Congress that " socialism needed light rather than heat," [3] he now declared that it needed warmth as much as light.

The most important changes of the constitution concerned the ultimate aim of the party and the enrolment of members, as may be seen from the following :—

" 3. (*d*) To secure for the producers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry, and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible, upon the basis of common ownership of the means of production and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service.

" (*e*) Generally to promote the political, social, and economic emancipation of the people, and more particularly of those who depend directly upon their own exertions by hand or by brain for the means of life."

The other important change concerned membership. While

[1] *Cf. supra*, Part III., p. 45.

[2] Labour Party (Sidney Webb), *Labour and the New Social Order*, London, 1918, p. 23.

[3] *Cf. supra*, Part IV., p. 285.

up to the beginning of 1918 the Labour Party was a confederation of trade unions and socialist bodies, which were affiliated each by a majority vote of its members, the new constitution provided also for the enrolment of individual members, and it afforded special facilities to women electors to join the party. The party has thus been organised on the double basis of national Labour or socialist bodies and constituency organisations, the latter enrolling individually men and women who subscribe to the party constitution and programme.

The Party, by embodying into its constitution the declaration of common ownership of the means of production, has become a socialist Labour party.

3.—THE CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME

The constructive work was outlined, on behalf of the Party, by Sidney Webb in his *Labour and the New Social Order*. He looked upon the last war as the final collapse of an industrial civilisation, which the workers would not seek to resuscitate. The war had destroyed the very basis of the individualist system of capitalist production. It proved economically far from efficient and morally indefensible. The new social edifice would be erected on four pillars : (*a*) the universal enforcement of the national minimum ; (*b*) the democratic control of industry ; (*c*) the revolution of national finance ; and (*d*) the surplus wealth for the common good. The first principle of the Labour Party was the securing to every member of the community, in good times and bad alike, of all the requisites of healthy life and worthy citizenship. It would do this by enforcing the universal application of the policy of a prescribed minimum of health, leisure, education, and subsistence by the extension of such legislation as the Factory Acts, Public Health Acts, Housing Acts, Education Acts, Trade Boards Act, and by various measures against unemployment.

The principle of control of industry demanded the progressive elimination of the private capitalist from the control of industry and the scientific reorganisation of the nation's work on the basis of common ownership of the means of production and equitable

distribution of the produce. The railways, mines, and electrical power should be immediately nationalised. In order to remove the evils of centralisation and the drawbacks of bureaucracy, the party would work for the fullest possible extension of the scope of democratically elected local governing bodies. Special care should be devoted to the democratisation of education and to the development of agriculture.

With regard to national finance, the party would raise the greater part of the revenue by direct taxation of the incomes above the necessary cost of family maintenance ; a very substantial part of the National Debt should be paid off by a special levy on capital.

The absorption of the wealth of the community by individual proprietors must be stopped ; the arising surplus wealth should be secured on the one hand by nationalisation and municipalisation and on the other hand by the steeply graduated taxation of private incomes and riches. The surplus wealth should be used for the perpetual improvement of the means of production and transport, for scientific research, and for the maintenance of the aged, sick, and infirm.

The party, in its Imperial policy, would repudiate all forcible domination of other races and countries ; it would develop a system of Home Rule and democratic self-government within the Empire. Its foreign policy would rest on a universal league of nations, with suitable machinery for judicial arbitration and conciliation.

With these social reforms and political aspirations, the labouring population is being imbued and organised into a vast national party, which within the next ten years might be called upon to form a Government. Still, socialism will have no easy triumph. It will meet with dexterous manœuvring and stubborn resistance on the part of the possessing classes and their adherents. For, capitalism, as a purely economic force, has not collapsed ; the leaders of industry, commerce, and finance do not at all feel like a bankrupt or effete class. Modern society has accomplished industrial wonders ; it has called into being productive forces and possibilities of wealth-creation

beyond the dreams of all scientific Utopias. And this is its justification and its title to existence. It will, therefore, not readily abdicate. And yet, it is being seriously challenged for it has utterly failed in the domain of social ethics. Its very success, its most marvellous achievements have been bound up with the destruction of human solidarity and social service. In its pride of wealth and science it has looked upon the *civitas terrena* as the real order of the universe. It has turned religion and ethics into handmaids to minister to its bodily comforts. The contrast between material efflorescence and moral stagnation is the root cause of the disharmony of modern humanity. From this hellish chasm springs the world tempest.

Socialism is called upon to redress the balance of material and moral power, to help mankind to attain to an equilibrium of the main forces of life. Its instruments are the poor and the lowly, as in the days of old. But they must take up their mission with clean hands and pure hearts, and not to try to do God's work with the devil's tools. Worldly power, the formation of Labour and socialist governments, must be strictly subordinated not only to the socialisation of the means of production, but to the socialisation of man, to the restoration of the moral order of the world.

XXII

GREAT BRITAIN IN TRANSFORMATION, 1917–28

I.—FROM INDIVIDUALIST TO CORPORATE ENTERPRISE

The twelve years from 1917 to 1928 witnessed even more profound changes in the social structure of Britain than the twelve years from 1903 to 1914. The new industrial revolution, of which the nation became conscious only in the years 1927 and 1928, began in the first decade of the new century. Until then the workshops and factories, the mercantile and financial houses of the country, were largely controlled by individual firms or families, and in the great majority of cases were carried on on a comparatively modest scale. Big industry was in the minority; trustification was just starting on its career; individual management formed still a potent factor in industrial life.[1] The second decade, with the pressure of German and American competition on British manufactures, with its four years of war and post-armistice prosperity, considerably accelerated the process of amalgamation of smaller and middle-sized undertakings into large-scale works and business concerns. The third decade, with its revolutionary changes in applied science, manufacturing processes, and means of transport—further, with its flaming conflicts between Capital and Labour in transport, engineering, and mining, which expanded to national dimensions—imparted the final stimulus to the amalgamating tendencies so characteristic of the industrial life of modern civilisation. On top of these unprecedented alterations in the economic structure and methods of production, transport, and exchange came the crisis in the basic industries which used to supply the bulk of British exports.

[1] *Cf.* Hewins, *Trade in the Balance* (London, 1924), pp. 16, 66–67.

Owing partly to a redistribution of the industrial activities of the nations, and partly to a shrinkage of the demand of certain countries—effects which were practically all due to the Great War (1914–18)—British coal, cotton, iron, and steel met everywhere, at home and abroad, with severe competition. The percentage of unemployment rose since 1921 to critical heights, with the consequent pressing down of the standard of living of large sections of the working population. The annual average percentages unemployed among members of trade unions making returns were—1911 : 3.0 ; 1912 : 3.2 ; 1913 : 2.1 ; 1919 : 2.4 ; 1920 : 2.4 ; 1921 : 14.8 ; 1922 : 15.8 ; 1923 : 11.3 ; 1924 : 8.1[1] ; 1925 : 10.5 ; 1926 : 12.2. And this state of things in the staple industries appears to assume a chronic character. Such a series of rapid changes and violent dislocations in the material conditions of a highly complicated and delicately poised national system were bound to generate widespread unrest, to release dissolving elements, and to quicken the desire either for the restoration of tranquillity and " normalcy "—that is, the *status quo ante*, with corresponding reforms, with the view of stabilising the essentials of the old society—or for a more or less bold advance towards a new form of social production and distribution, for a different social order, more in accord with the new industrial forces which were distinctly tending to collective ownership and responsibility. The idea " that the existing industrial system is only a stage in our economic evolution " began to penetrate into the circle of the great captains of industry.[2] Furthermore, with the younger generation of British historical and social students, the recognition of the economic and collectivist factor is visibly displacing the political and parliamentary, personal, and

[1] The improvement was due to the French occupation of the German Ruhr valley, which paralysed German coal and metal industries, and thus benefited the corresponding British industries.

[2] The quotation is taken from the speech of Sir David Milne-Watson, at the Mond-Turner Conference, held on January 12, 1928. (*Report to the 60th Annual Congress of the British Trades Unions*, London, 1928, p. 137.)

heroic interpretation of national developments. One may venture now to predict that the coming historians of Britain will be much more occupied with researches into industrial changes, and their attendant social collisions, than with conflicts between kings and barons, between personal monarchy and parliament, or between theology and enlightenment, religion and science.

No social class and no political party escaped the effects of the changes and vicissitudes to which Britain was exposed in the last decade. What those effects were may be easily surmised from the foregoing reflections. The people of substance, with a stake in the country, and those who were dependent on them, or those who from temperament and conviction saw the salvation of the country in the adherence to traditional ways of life, turned to the Conservative Party. Men and women, born after 1871, caught sight of the ghost of revolution for the first time in their lives in the years 1917, 1918, and 1919, and could not forget it. They eschewed all Radical phraseology and took refuge under the wing of the traditional party of law and order.

The working people, with nothing but their labour capacity, and organised in trade unions, as well as men and women not belonging to the wage-earning class, but who from temperament and conviction, from intellectual and moral considerations, saw the solution of the crisis in the enactment of social reform measures became socialists and joined the Labour Party. The conversion of organised Labour to socialism was one of the phenomena of the years 1917–28. Henceforth trade union history forms a part of socialist history.[1]

[1] There were, of course, socialists among the trade unionists as far back as the 'nineties of the last century; and Trades Union Congresses carried sometimes socialist resolutions ; but these were sporadic and informal affairs, not binding on anybody. It was only in 1918 and 1924 respectively that political and industrial Labour adopted socialist programmes, with the full knowledge of their significance.

Both parties grew at the expense of the Liberals, whose voting strength dwindled in the same measure as economic individualism was losing ground in the centres of industry and commerce. The parliamentary and municipal elections of the decade 1918–28 bore witness to the political regroupment of the nation on the new economic lines. The eclipse of the Liberal Party must, however, not be taken to signify the extinction of liberalism. Indeed, the Liberal Party might ultimately be crushed between the upper millstone of Conservatism and the nether millstone of social reform Labour, and yet liberalism as an attitude of mind would remain one of the controlling factors in British politics and a considerable obstacle against any advance of either fascism or bolshevism. The individualist and competitive phase of capitalist enterprise generated out of its material conditions and interests the ideas of toleration, freedom of thought, respect of the individual conscience and judgment, and bequeathed it as a spiritual legacy to posterity. More or less of its substance was gradually woven into the mental texture of various strata of the nation, and liberalised them. The great majority of the British people may truly say, "We are all liberals now, but each of us with some adjective which marks us off from the Liberal Party." And nowhere has liberalism been more completely assimilated than by the Labour Party.[1] It is the method of Labour democracy. This is the watershed between the social democratic Labour movement and the communist Labour movement.

[1] "We Young Liberals," writes one of them in the *Manchester Guardian*, November 13, 1924, "find our ideals in the Labour Party." And E. B. Schofield writes (*ibid.*, November 5, 1924), "We young people are joining the Labour Party in large numbers, but we remain essentially liberal at heart." The Hon. R. D. Denman and E. G. Armstrong are pleading for merging the Liberal Party in the Labour Party, since everything essentially liberal is to be found in the Labour Party (*ibid.*, November 12, 1924, and November 7, 1924). The correspondence columns of the *Manchester Guardian*, in October–November, 1924, and again in September–October, 1928, on labour and liberalism are of great sociological value.

2.—GENERAL VIEW OF ORGANISED LABOUR, 1917–28

The first quarter of the century (1903–26) was characterised by an increase of disputes unprecedented in the number of workers involved and the aggregate duration in working days. In the six years 1903–08 the total number of workpeople involved in disputes amounted to 952,000; the aggregate duration in working days 22,100,000. In the six years 1909–14 the respective figures were 4,136,000 and 83,290,000, though in the last five months of the year 1914, owing to the war, all disputes ceased. In the years 1915 and 1916 the industrial truce was fairly observed. In the six years 1917–22 the respective figures were 8,868,000 and 174,781,000. In the four years 1923–26 the respective numbers were 4,193,000 and 189,281,000. The rise of the social temperature in 1917–26 was alarming, and symptomatic of the revolutionary changes which were going on in industrial and political life. Still, not all the disputes were of the same nature. From the point of view of the economic action of organised Labour, the years 1917–26 divide into two periods —*viz.*, 1917–21 and 1921–26. The years from 1927 onwards fall into a different social category, and will be dealt with later on.

In the four or five years from 1917 till the "Black Friday" (April 15, 1921) the trade unions were animated by a fighting spirit, and took the offensive, not merely for strictly industrial aims connected with wages and hours of work, but for larger social objectives, as control of industry, nationalisation. The disputes assumed national dimensions, the unions not directly involved were ready to take sympathetic action and to solidarise themselves with the strikers. While not succeeding in their larger objectives, the disputes brought many advantages to Labour. Wages rose, the weekly working hours decreased, the care for the unemployed and the necessitous came to be regarded as a national duty, expenditure on social reform measures and benefits increased considerably. Nineteen-twenty marked the peak year in the advance of the working class; its share in the national income of 1919–20 was probably larger than ever

before or after.[1] Those achievements cannot, however, be ascribed exclusively to trade union activities and policy. They appear to have been partly due to the fear of revolution—a sort of insurance premium against social conflagrations and breakages, paid by the propertied classes—and partly the effect of the post-bellum prosperity, which allowed more liberal remuneration all round. The prestige of trade unionism was likewise greatest in 1920, when its membership amounted to 6.5 millions, or about 50 per cent. of the number of industrial and mercantile workers, a figure never reached before nor after. It was, too, in 1920 that industrial and political Labour formed a Council of Action to bring pressure to bear upon the Government to desist from attacking Russia. British Labour was then full of optimism and ready to pass any revolutionary motion. In one of the greatest speeches ever delivered by J. H. Thomas, we find the following memorable words :

"During the past few weeks (August, 1920) we have gone through what is, perhaps, the most momentous period of the Trade Union and Labour Movement in our long history: a period which found, for the first time, a united and determined working-class effort to challenge the existing order of Parliamentary Government. . . . That our course was bold none can deny ; that it definitely challenged the Constitution there can be no doubt . . . but it was justified by the result. . . . Our only object was to prevent another war against Russia. So far we have succeeded, but the danger is not yet over, and cannot be over until a complete peace and understanding is arrived at with the Russian Government. Our action does not carry with it an acclamation of the Soviet method of Government. We can, by unity and by the exercise of our political powers, determine our own form of Government, and if the Russian people prefer the Soviet system it is their business." (*Report of T.U. Congress*, 1920, pp. 62–63).

This utterance of J. H. Thomas adequately characterised the sentiments of Labour in 1920.

[1] "Wages reached their highest level in December 1920." (*Times*, October 19, 1928, *sub* "Rises in rates of wages.") The high rate of wages and the very low percentage of unemployment, amounting to 2·4 only, may be taken as the justification of the above assumption.

The second period embraced the years from the spring of 1921 to the end of 1926. In this period, trade unionism was driven into a defensive position. All it could do was to strive for maintaining and safeguarding the achievements of the immediate past. All the great contests which organised Labour fought in those memorable years on the industrial and political field, while unparalleled in magnitude and far-reaching in their bearing on the course of British history, were but actions of defence and resistance. The struggles which occurred in the years between the " Black Friday " and the National Stoppage in May, 1926, lacked the aggressive character. The same remark applies to the electoral efforts of Labour in the years 1923 and 1924, as well as to the measures of the first Labour Government in 1924. Organised Labour fought with determination, with exasperation, and some groups with revolutionary fervour, not for the overthrow or transformation of the existing order, but against being deprived of the advantages gained in the years 1917–20. A. J. Cook's cry during the miners' struggle in 1926, " Not a penny off the pay and not a second on the day," epitomised the feelings and views of the overwhelming majority of the trade unions in the period 1921–26. Yet many of the achievements were lost ; the hopes for control of industry vanished ; all guild experiments, undertaken in 1920–22, failed through shortage of capital. The situation appeared desperate, and it favoured the spread of social revolutionary ideas. The Communist Party, established in 1920–21, began only in 1923 to gain adherents in working-class circles ; in 1924 the Anglo-Russian Advisory Council was formed, and Bolshevik delegations from Moscow were heartily welcomed on the Trades Union Congresses in Hull (1924) and Scarborough (1925)—indeed, the whole atmosphere of the Scarborough Congress was charged with revolutionary aspirations. There was a great contrast between the daily struggles for immediate interests and the revolutionary sentiments and theories that swayed the Congresses and meetings.

The two periods of aggression and defence, or the ascending and descending curve of the aspirations of Labour, found their counterpart in the rise and decline of the trade union

membership. The number of members represented on the Trades Union Congress, 1905, amounted to barely a million; in 1910 to 1,647,715; in 1917 to 3,082,352; in 1918 to 4,532,086; in 1919 to 5,283,676; in 1920 to 6,505,482; in 1921 to 6,417,910; in 1922 to 5,128,648; in 1923 to 4,369,268; in 1924 to 4,328,235; in 1925 to 4,350,982; in 1926 to 4,365,691; in 1927 to 4,163,994; in 1928 to 3,900,000.

The year 1927 inaugurated a new period which promised to be marked by an armistice, and even friendly co-operation, between Capital and Labour, with a view to reconstructing the industrial organisation.

3.—THE MINING INDUSTRY AS STORM-CENTRE

In the years 1917–26 there occurred several large or national disputes, such as in the railway service in 1919, which involved 517,000 persons and caused a loss of 4,200,000 working days; in engineering, etc., in 1922, which involved 369,000 persons, causing a loss of 17,484,000 working days; in the building trade in 1924, which involved 115,000 persons, causing a loss of 3,145,000 working days. None, however, could compare in the remotest degree in point of importance and consequences with the chain of conflicts in the coal industry. There were several causes which accounted for the unsettlement of the conditions in the coalfields. First, the predominantly obsolescent, small scale, and wasteful way of coal getting. Secondly, the unwillingness of the Government to recognise the principle of nationalisation, and to accept in letter and spirit the Sankey Report. Thirdly, the transition from war to peace: during the war years the British coal industry was under State control and enjoyed on the markets of the European Allies a quasi-monopoly, earning and accumulating large profits, from which also the miners benefited; on the signing of the Versailles Peace the monopolist advantages gradually disappeared. Coal exports declined and prices fell. French and Belgian mines revived; German industry was getting on its legs again, and, being under the necessity of providing not only sustenance for its own population, but heavy reparation payments for the Allies, it strained

all its energies to raise production and push the export trade to its utmost limit; moreover, the Spa Agreement (July, 1920) imposed upon Germany the obligation of delivering two million tons of coal monthly to France, which, in its turn, disposed of it in other markets. The autumn of 1920 was actually the beginning of the crisis in the British coal industry. The same date may be fixed for the abrupt termination of the post-armistice industrial prosperity in Britain and the setting in of the trade depression, with its consequent rapid, even catastrophic, rise of unemployment. The causal connection between the two series of phenomena—the revival of German industry, spurred on by the bayonet-point of the Versailles Treaty and Spa Agreement on the one hand, and the sudden collapse of the British "boom" on the other—is shown in the following table:

Percentage unemployed among members of British and German trade unions, 1920–22

	Great Britain [1]			Germany [2]		
Month	1920	1921	1922	1920	1921	1922
June	1.2	20.6	15.6	4.0	3.0	0.6
Dec.	6.0	16.2	13.8	4.2	1.6	2.8

In the same measure as the unemployment figures rose in Great Britain, they fell in Germany. The growing depression of British industry reacted unfavourably on the home demand for coal. In the course of the latter half of 1920 the British miners felt all security slipping from under their feet. Their long-standing demand for nationalisation [3] had to give way to

[1] *Nineteenth Abstract of Labour Statistics of the United Kingdom*, 1928, p. 79.

[2] *Statistisches Jahrbuch f. d. Deutsche Reich*, 1926, p. 304.

[3] Robert Smillie, in moving a resolution on the T.U. Congress, 1919, in favour of nationalisation, remarked, "I find that since the year 1882 this Congress has actually passed no less than forty-two resolutions in favour of the general principle of nationalisation. . . . It is over twenty years since the Congress first passed a resolution affirming the principle that the mineral wealth of the country ought to be the wealth of the State, and not of individuals." (*Report of the T.U. Congress*, 1919 pp. 259–60.)

less radical proposals, and, finally, nothing was left to them but to carry on a prolonged, costly, and, withal, hopeless battle for a living wage. In their despair, the miners downed tools on October 18, 1920, whereupon the Government moved for an Emergency Powers Act, and carried it on October 28. The Act has become one of the most powerful weapons in the hands of Government authority, equal to the old-time Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, which served Pitt and Lord Sidmouth against the English Jacobins and working-class Radicals in the last years of the eighteenth and the first quarter of the nineteenth centuries. On November 3 the stoppage was settled by compromise, which merely postponed the *dénouement* of the crisis. It was but the end of the first act of the tragedy which was to occupy the public stage up to the end of 1926. It called forth the whole heroism which British workmen are capable of and entailed immense suffering on millions of men, women, and children. The tragedy rolled on. On February 15, 1921, the Government announced decontrol of coal, which took effect on March 31, 1921. The owners got back the full control of the mines, and at once proposed drastic wage reductions and settlement by districts. The miners rejected the proposals and were locked out. The sympathy of the whole working class went out to the miners; the Triple Alliance was stirred to action. A stoppage of the whole traffic by land and water was fixed for Friday, April 15, 1921. The Government mobilised all available armed forces, and declared a State of Emergency; there was tension in London, and an intervention of the Government in favour of the miners seemed likely. In the last moment, however, at midnight April 15, Frank Hodges, the miners' secretary, threw a plank over the yawning gulf and *pourparlers* with both parties were opened, which enabled the leaders of the railwaymen and the transport workers to recede from the participation in the stoppage. There was no doubt that the masses were ready to respond to the call for a general strike, but the spell was broken. There were charges against the leaders of having betrayed the militant working class, and the Friday, April 15, 1921, was black marked in the calendar of advanced Labour, and became known

as "Black Friday." The miners, however, with their indomitable perserverance, fought on till June, when starvation forced them into submission. Henceforth, with the exception of one day ("Red Friday," July 31, 1925), the initiative was with the owners. In the second half of 1923, owing to the French occupation of the Ruhr Valley (the main German coalfields) and the consequent paralysis of the German metal industry, the depression in the British coal and metal industries somewhat lifted, and in 1924 the miners succeeded in getting their minimum wage raised. With the re-opening of the Ruhr coalfields the British coal crisis reasserted itself. The owners knew no other remedy but wage reductions and the increase of the weekly working hours, and gave notice to terminate the agreement of 1924 on July 31, 1925. The miners, led by A. J. Cook, the successor of Frank Hodges, argued—and in this they used the arguments of the whole Labour movement—that worsening of the labour conditions would not mend matters, and that the remedy was to be found in a reorganisation of the industry on rational lines which would increase its productive efficiency and competitive power, and, pending the results of reconstruction, the State should grant a subsidy to the industry. The owners and the Government spurned the miners views. The Prime Minister (Mr. Baldwin) set his face against the subsidy, but recommended the setting up of a Royal Commission to inquire into the coal industry. The miners, remembering the fate of the Sankey Commission, fought shy of further inquiries. Both parties then prepared for the worst. Interviews and negotiations having proved abortive, the General Council stepped in, and on July 30, 1925, the leaders of the railway and transport workers issued notices to refuse to handle coal after midnight of Friday, July 31. The publication of the notices had an electric effect on the Prime Minister: the general strike was, after all, going to materialise. After an interview with the miners on Friday, July 31, he granted the subsidy and requested the owners to suspend the notices; on the other hand, the miners withdrew their opposition to the Royal Commission.

The victory of the miners and the solidarity of the trade union

world manifested on Friday, July 31, or "Red Friday," was regarded in some quarters as a humiliating defeat of all Government authority, and it was felt desirable to render any similar attempt on the part of Labour impossible. The nine months of the subsidies (August 1, 1925, to April 30, 1926) allowed time enough for preparations. In September, 1925, the Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies (a purely voluntary organisation) was instituted. In October most of the Communist leaders were imprisoned for six and twelve months respectively. In November, 1925, local authorities were circularised and their duties in the event of a strike explained. Stocks of coal were laid in, adequate for a five months' stoppage; and large additions were made to the police.[1] The Communists urged the formation of proletarian Defence Corps, propaganda in the Army and Navy, agreement with the co-operative societies for supplying the miners with food—finally, assumption by the Trades Union Congress of Government functions: that is, the organisation of a Soviet Government. The General Council, however, was from the outset determined not to give cause for prosecutions or persecutions, hoping that organised Labour would succeed in getting the Prime Minister to continue the subsidy. Meanwhile the Government had set up a Royal Commission, under the chairmanship of Sir Herbert Samuel, which issued on March 6, 1926, an exhaustive and instructive Report, recommending thorough reconstruction of production and marketing of coal, discontinuance of the subsidy, retention of the seven hours' day, and a wage reduction. Neither the owners nor the miners accepted the Report. The general strike again loomed on the horizon, but this time the Government and the propertied classes were fully prepared for any emergency. Indeed, for an economically dependent class, a chance victory over a powerful ruling class, is more dangerous than a defeat: the Roman slave rebellion under Spartacus, and the English peasant war under Wat Tyler are the classic examples of that

[1] *The British Public and the General Strike*, by Kingsley Martin, London, 1926, pp. 55–56.

lesson. The Government and the influential men and women of the ruling class conceived the general strike as an attack on constitutional government, on law and order, and as leading to ruin and anarchy. (Mr. Baldwin, in the *British Gazette*, May 6, 1926.) On the other side, the leaders of Labour thought of nothing else than a few days manifestation of working-class solidarity with the miners' cause, as the noblest expression of loyalty to their long-suffering brethren in the coalfields, in order to impress upon the Government the urgent necessity of continuing the subsidy until reorganisation of the mines was well under way. From the middle of April, 1926, innumerable meetings, interviews, and conferences were held between the miners and the General Council, between the latter and the Government ; a Special Conference of the Executives of all important unions sat since April 29, 1926, in London ; but no peaceful solution of the crisis was in sight. The owners insisted on an extension of the working day and a wage reduction ; the Government refused to continue the subsidy ; the miners defended the *status quo*. The battle was joined. It needed but a slight incident to cause the guns to go off. On April 30 the King signed a Proclamation declaring a State of Emergency ; the Government departments were busy with mobilising the armed and civil forces ; on May 1 the lock-out of over a million miners took effect ; on the same day the special Conference of the Union Executives approved by 3,653,529 votes to 49,911 the proposal for a general stoppage to begin at midnight of May 4. The negotiations with the Government were still going on the whole of May 3, when, late in the night, the fatal incident happened. The machine workers of the *Daily Mail* refused to print an article which, in their opinion, was a gross libel on the trade unions, calculated to inflame public opinion and set class against class. Mr. Baldwin, informed by telephone of that incident, declared this to have been " the first move in the general strike " and broke off all negotiations.

On May 4, 1926, the general or national strike began. The response of the workers surpassed all expectations. The best paid categories of employees obeyed the call of the General Council.

The industries that were to be included in the strike were transport, railway service, printing and newspaper business, metals, building (except sanitary, health, and food services). But only transport, railways, Press, metal workers, and gas and electrical workers concerned with the supply of power for industry or a total of 1,580,000 persons, besides the miners, were called up as the first line of defence. They were eventually to be joined by the electricians, gas-workers, etc., as second line, who would have done their duty by the miners. The General Council decided, however, not to go to the length of stopping light, food distribution, etc. From the number of persons involved in the stoppage it could not reasonably be called a general strike, but the absence of traffic and daily papers created the impression that the whole national life was brought to a standstill. Most of the daily papers did not appear at all, and some only in a considerably reduced size. The Government established the *British Gazette* as its organ ; the General Council the *British Worker*; the Communists issued typewritten bulletins. In these papers the Government and Labour gave their views and news concerning the stoppage. The *British Gazette* informed the public that the strike meant civil war ; the *British Worker* assured that it was nothing of the kind, but an industrial dispute which from particular circumstances assumed larger dimensions than former strikes. Towards the end of the first week, when, owing to a shortage of raw materials or fuel, other workshops and factories began to shut down and the stoppage threatened to become really general, Sir Herbert Samuel hurried back from Italy to London, and, after having an interview with the Minister for Mines, approached the General Council and submitted to them a memorandum embodying the conditions which were believed to be susceptible of forming a basis for a resumption of negotiations. The General Council, after discussing and altering the memorandum, agreed with Sir Herbert that a basis for negotiations was formed and decided to terminate the stoppage. Two members of the General Council called at noon, May 12, 1926, on Mr. Baldwin, who, accompanied by half a dozen State Secretaries and Ministers, received the *surrender*—so the *British*

Gazette expressed it—of the Labour leaders. The General Council issued an order to strikers to return to work. The railwaymen, transport workers, compositors and printers gradually obeyed the order, but the miners rejected the memorandum; the lockout continued during the long summer and autumn, for over six weary and terrible months, until it accomplished the work of attrition. Poor relief, borrowings from co-operative societies, contributions from trade unions, British and foreign—the Russians sent over £1,100,000—fell far short of satisfying the most elementary needs of the locked-out families. At the beginning of November, 1926, their endurance was at an end. Starved and broken, the miners surrendered at discretion, leaving some hundred thousands of them to penury and acute distress.

Apart from the misery in the mining districts, the national strike and the mining dispute left their mark on the Statute Book of the Realm. In 1927 the Government carried the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act, which brands as illegal general and sympathetic strikes, restricts picketing, makes the law courts the final arbiters of the legality or illegality of strike activities, and tends to upset the financial basis of the Labour Party by the contracting-in clause: only those trade unionists may contribute to the political fund (that is to the fund of the Labour Party) who declare in writing on a special form that they are willing to be levied for that purpose. The income of the Labour Party for the year 1927–28 was thereby seriously reduced.

4.—REFLECTIONS ON THE GENERAL STRIKE AND LABOUR

The attitude and utterances of some of the propertied classes and their newspapers during the general strike afforded sufficient evidence of the existence of large and influential circles in Great Britain who still look on the working population as lower orders and on their independent actions as rebellious. This bodes ill for the future of a country which is involved in a new industrial revolution, with all its consequent dislocations, disturbances, and necessarily painful readjustments.

The nine days national stoppage disclosed the strength and

determination of the masses to go ahead with the fight. There is much potential revolutionary feeling among the British working class ; they will one day, as the new industrial revolution unfolds itself, rise up again and change their leaders and organisations, unless there is a change of attitude of the upper classes and higher officialdom, and rationalisation proves capable of satisfying the needs of the working population. A study of the last British general strike, such as attempted by Kingsley Martin in his *British Public and the General Strike*, or as rhapsodically given by H. G. Wells in his *Meanwhile*, is well worth undertaking and pondering over.

On the other hand, there is no reason to concur in the charges of treason and cowardice levelled at the men of the " Black Friday " and May 12, 1926. As a matter of fact, the trade union leader can do nothing with the idea of a revolutionary general strike ; this is, in his eyes, if at all practicable, an eminently political affair, involving ultimately the taking over of Government by the Labour Party. He thinks in industrial terms, he deals with labour conditions and not with social problems. His proper function, he has come to learn, is negotiating with employers, and not overthrowing Capital. His ambition is to be a successful negotiator, to pit his intellect against that of the big industrial employer, and outwit a board of directors. In this state of mind, leaders are not likely to respond with alacrity when called upon to marshal the men into battle array and fight to a finish. The more the antagonistic nature of the dispute asserts itself, the more is their mind inclined to turn towards some solution which affords negotiating and mediating free scope. This happened towards the end of the first week of the general strike, when Sir Herbert Samuel appeared on the scene with his memorandum. There is no betrayal in such a turn of the dispute ; it proceeds logically from the inclination and conviction of those leaders ; far from thinking that they are betraying the cause of Labour, they themselves feel betrayed by those who manœuvre them into a general strike. This was the feeling of the General Council (except A. J. Cook) all along during the nine days from May 4 to 12, 1926. And the same feeling swayed the leaders of

the Labour Party. They all went into the fight actuated by a sense of loyalty, and not by reasoned conviction. The leading men of the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party are moving now on parallel lines, because their respective spheres are being clearly defined. Harmony reigns between the political and industrial wing of the organised working class. Both wings have been co-ordinating their measures against the Left opposition, the Minority movement and the Communists. It has taken three years (1925–28) of patient effort to make the trade unions conform to the anti-Communist resolutions of the Labour Party.

5.—RISE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

One of the symptoms of the struggles in the years 1917–21 was the rise of a Communist Party which instituted itself as the British Section of the Third (Moscow) International. Its direct influence has not been commensurate with its efforts ; even in the years 1925–26, which were quite favourable to the growth of a revolutionary working-class party, the ultimate increase of its membership was disappointing. The number of its members was in 1928 about 3,000 to 4,000 in all. But its indirect influence on all those trade union elements who have been dissatisfied with an industrial leadership which shuns fighting has been considerable, though here, again, many of those elements have kept aloof from the Communist Party, and have formed organisations or movements of their own. The opposition to the Labour Party policy or trade union leadership—such as the Left Wing, the Minority Movement, the Cook-Maxton conferences—while in contact with, or promoted by, the Communists, consists in the main of non-Communists. But, small in number as they are, the Communists have everywhere been in the thick of the battle. The Labour Party Executive, in rejecting the application of the Communist Party for affiliation, stated that the "energy and enthusiasm of the Communists is undoubted." (*Report of the Annual Conference of the Labour Party*, 1924, pp. 38–39.) And in

H. G. Wells's *Meanwhile* it is said of the Communists, in connection with the general strike of May 16, 1926, " The only people in all the tangle of affairs who seem to have any life in them and any real go are—don't be startled—the Communist Party. They can take risks and sacrifice themselves—quite horrible risks they will face." Yet they are far from growing into a mass movement, and could not do their work without the financial backing from the Communist International. Maybe that their day will arrive when a Labour Government, backed by a majority of its own, disappoints the hopes of the working class. This will be the crucial time of the British Labour movement.

The Communist Party was established in 1920–21. On July 31 and August 1, 1920, a conference of the British Socialist Party, the Scottish Socialist Labour Party, and similar groups took place in London, with the view of forming a Communist Party. The main discussion turned on two questions : adhesion to the Third International ; affiliation to the Labour Party. The first question was soon settled : a resolution in favour of adhesion to the Third International was carried by acclamation. The second question gave rise to a serious difference of opinion ; a strong minority argued against affiliation. It was only at the end of January, 1921, that the representatives of the above-mentioned organisations, assembled in conference at Leeds, arrived at a decision in favour of affiliation and formed the Communist Party of Great Britain (C.P.G.B.). The Party Executive applied for affiliation to the Labour Party. The matter came up for final decision at the Labour Party Annual Conference, 1924. After an exhaustive debate, a card vote was taken on the following three resolutions: " 1. That the application of the Communist Party for affiliation be refused." Carried by 3,185,000 votes to 193,000. " 2. That no member of the Communist Party be eligible for endorsement as a Labour candidate for Parliament or any local authority." Carried by 2,456,000 to 654,000. " 3. That no member of the Communist Party be eligible for membership of the Labour Party." Carried by 1,804,000 to 1,540,000. A year later the Annual Conference of the Labour Party passed a resolution by 2,870,000 votes to 321,000 asking the trade unions to refrain

from sending members of the Communist Party as delegates to Labour Party conferences or meetings. Slowly but surely the trade union executives conformed to the request of the Labour Party. They could not proceed against the Communists on the same grounds as the Labour Party, since eligibility for union membership does not depend on political or any other views, but on the industrial status. The trade unions can only proceed against members who are endangering the interests of the organisation. In 1927 and 1928 the Communists were, so to speak, reduced in rank, because, in the opinion of the executives, their speeches and actions had the tendency or the effect of splitting the unions or reducing their membership. The Communists and their adherents and sympathisers in the Minority Movement or Left Wing were in many cases disqualified from being elected as delegates or holding any office or any position of authority in the trade unions. The ban on the Communists is all but complete.

Up to 1928 the Communist electoral policy was friendly to official Labour candidates. As a rule, they supported them at elections and refrained from running candidates against them. Only in constituencies where there was no Labour candidates did the Communists put up their own. At the general election of October, 1924, they contested eight seats, with the following results: Saklatvala (Battersea), 15,096 votes—increase against 1923, 2,755 votes; Stewart (Dundee), 8,340 votes—decrease 2,000; Wall (Streatham), 3,204 votes; Vaughan (Bethnal Green), 6,024 votes—increase 773; Tom Mann, 2,605 votes; William Paul (Rusholme), 5,328 votes—increase 38; Geddes (Greenock), 7,590 votes—decrease 3,000; Dunstan (Birmingham), 7,158 votes. The eight candidates polled a total of 55,345 votes.

The year 1928 marked a turning-point in the Communist electoral policy. The Communist International decided that the Communists should everywhere put up candidates against Social Democracy or Labour Parties. This decision was put to the test for the first time at a by-election in North Aberdeen (August, 1928), with the following result: Wedgwood Benn (Labour), 10,640 votes; Sandeman (Con.), 4,696; Ferguson (Communist), 2,618;

Rutherford (Lib.), 2,337 votes. At the next general election (1929) 15 to 20 Communist candidates will run against some of the most prominent Labour leaders. Ramsay MacDonald, the Parliamentary and spiritual leader of the Labour Party and parliamentary candidate for Seaham Harbour, will be opposed by the Communist, Harry Pollitt (boilermaker), the most persuasive and respected speaker of the Communists.

The main Communist organ is the *Labour Monthly*, always notable for Palme Dutt's comments on the current events in the Labour Movement.

6.—LABOUR PARTY, ITS GROWTH AND POLICY, 1918–28

The growth of the voting strength of the Labour Party has been proceeding without interruption and without reverse, as may be seen from the following table:

General Election.	Seats Contested.	Members returned.	Labour Vote.
1918	316	57	2,244,945
1922	414	142	4,236,733
1923	427	191	4,348,379
1924	514	151	5,487,620

The number of members oscillates round three millions, but this is not so reliable a gauge as the voting strength. The party draws its votes mainly from the trade union world; probably 90 per cent. of the party voters have been working men and women, and only 10 per cent. professional men and women. The electoral progress of the party has been most marked in the industrial and commercial centres, while in the counties there are large stretches of land not touched yet by political Labour.

There is no doubt that the party will in the future turn its attention more and more to the agricultural districts, where, however, it will meet with the rivalry of the Liberals and the entrenched positions of the Conservatives.

The organisation of the working women is being carefully attended to by the chief woman officer, Dr. Marion Phillips. At the annual conference of the labour women held at Portsmouth in May, 1928, there were 663 delegates, representing 476 women's sections, 71 divisional and local Labour Parties, and 116 trade unions, co-operative and socialist societies. The organ of the movement is the monthly *Labour Woman*.

The most important event in the political history of the last decade was the assumption of Government office by the Labour Party at the end of January, 1924. Although it lasted only to the end of October—about nine months in all—and although it had no majority of its own, it has left an indelible impression on social thought. The grandchildren of the " labouring poor," as the working class was called at the end of the eighteenth century, and the children of the " lower orders," as the working class was known in the middle of the nineteenth century, controlled—as far as any Government can control—the destinies of Great Britain and, to a large extent, the British Empire. The mere thought of it would have staggered or convulsed with laughter the statesmen of a century ago. The deeds and measures of the Labour Government are of much less importance than the fact of its existence. The year 1924 is an epoch-making one in British history. Our grandchildren, from their more favourable angle of vision, will get a truer perspective of the magnitude of the event.

Linked with this event are—Ramsay MacDonald as Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, Philip Snowden as Chancellor of the Exchequer, John Wheatley as Minister of Health, and Sidney Webb as President of the Board of Trade.

The stabilisation of international peace was partly attempted, partly promoted, by the MacDonald Government through the recognition of the Russian Soviet Government, the Dawes Plan, the Geneva Protocol, and the draft agreement of commerce and

amity with the Soviet Government. The Imperial interests were safeguarded through a policy of continuity in relation to Egypt, the Mossul dispute, India, etc., whereby strategical and commercial considerations were its motives. The leader of the Labour Party and British Prime Minister disillusioned the leaders of the revolutionary nationalist elements in Egypt, Turkey, and India. And Mr. Snowden's Budget was in the best Radical "breakfast table" tradition. In home affairs, Wheatley's Housing Act, the improvement in Unemployment Insurance, the preliminary work for widows' and orphans' pensions, and for the extension of the suffrage to young women, were greatly to the credit of the Labour Government. The year 1924 was, besides, the only one in the series from 1921 to 1928 in which the total increase of wages overbalanced the total decrease. Most beneficial of all was the influence of the Labour Government on the progressive movements in Europe.

In the first week of October, 1924, through a combined Conservative-Liberal action, the position of the Labour Government became critical. The refusal of the Government to assent to the appointment of a Committee to inquire into the quashing of the prosecution of J. R. Campbell, the editor of the Communist weekly paper, resulted in its defeat. On October 9, MacDonald dissolved Parliament. After twenty days of a most passionately fought electoral campaign—in which the so-called Zinovieff Letter, and in reality the fight against the British-Russian draft agreement, played a sinister part—the election took place on October 29, 1924, and resulted in an overwhelming victory of the Conservative Party.

The nine-months Labour Government strengthened, on the one hand, the reformist tendencies of the leaders of the Labour movement as against the revolutionists, while, on the other hand, they produced much dissatisfaction in advanced Labour and socialist circles, who had expected the Government to stand in trade disputes by the trade unions, instead of which they were amazed to hear that a Labour Government must be, and was indeed, prepared to have recourse to the Emergency Powers Act against the workers. The trade union weeklies and monthlies—

particularly the railwaymen's, engineers', woodworkers', and foundry workers'—were filled with closely reasoned discussions of socialist policy, class struggle, Marxism, communism, which exhibited a very high level of social and economic thinking. The national organisations of both the Minority Movement in the trade unions and the Left Wing in the Labour Party were formed in that memorable year 1924.

7.—THE ESSENCE OF LABOUR PARTY AND TRADE UNIONIST POLICY

The great majority of trade unionists and Labour members, however, accept in the main the policy of their leaders, which may be thus formulated:

There is no collapse of the capitalist system, but it cannot be denied that it is dangerously out of gear, that there is a serious disproportion between the various industries and between production and consumption, between supply and effective demand, resulting in chaotic conditions which make themselves painfully felt in the life of the workers in the shape of unemployment and decreasing wages. A reconstruction of the system of production and distribution is necessary. This is recognised on all hands; enlightened and progressive employers are ready to undertake it. But there is another important factor to be considered: the working classes have grown into a great political power: they can make and unmake governments; they can promote or prevent reconstruction. To this the workers may retort: "It is not at all our business to help reconstruct a system that exploits and degrades us; let it perish, and we shall rebuild an industrial system on socialist lines for ourselves." The leaders' reply is as follows: "Socialist society cannot be erected on the ruined capitalist system, but on its fullest development; the reconstruction which is wanted means rationalisation and amalgamation; the small scale, wasteful undertakings are eliminated; the productive forces raised; the sources of wealth are made to flow abundantly. At the same time the number of independent employers decreases, while the number of workers increases, and not only in number, but in organisation, knowledge, and executive ability. The whole

process amounts, indeed, to a gradual, orderly progress towards socialism. Continuity and gradualness, and not, as Marx thought, revolution and catastrophes, will lead us to emancipation. We ask you, therefore, to co-operate with the captains of industry in the great task of reconstruction; but you must have a voice in the management; you must influence the course of reconstruction in your own interests, material as well as moral. This will be a step forward in the democratisation of industry, and will constitute one of those reforms which are in their very nature socialistic—that is, in full conformity with our aim. Furthermore, if you give us a majority in Parliament we shall legislate for all those reforms which are calculated to protect you from excessive exploitation, and which are promoting socialisation, such as nationalisation of the mines, railways, etc. Your work in the factory and in the council chamber with the capitalists, and our work in Parliament—industrial and political action—will be complementary to one another. In short, our aim and end is socialism through democratic reforms and constitutional methods. The nature of the British Constitution operates in our favour. It knows no finality. It is flexible. Any part of it may be changed by Act of Parliament. Born in the struggle for freedom, it is broadening down, as Dicey demonstrated, from political to social precedent."[1]

This is the essence of the Labour Party policy, expressed in the various resolutions and in the new programme *Labour and the Nation*, and approved by the Annual Conference of the Labour Party in Birmingham, October, 1928. And this is the meaning of the new trade unionist policy as expressed in the Mond-Turner conferences.

The years 1927–28 marked the beginning of a new period of trade union policy. If the years 1917–21 formed a period of trade union offensive and the years 1921–26 of trade union defensive, the years 1927–28 initiated a period of industrial armistice and even co-operation, with strong concentration of the Labour forces on electoral and parliamentary activity. The

[1] *Cf.* Dicey, *Law and Opinion in England*, ed. 1924, pp. 211–302, and John Morley, *Life of Cobden*, I., pp. 302–03.

Anglo-Russian Advisory Council was discontinued and the relations with the Russian trade unions were broken off. The new policy took its start from a suggestion of George Hicks, who, as president of the General Council in 1926–27, opened the Fifty-Ninth Trades Union Congress in Edinburgh (September, 1927) with an address in which the following passage occurred. "Our trade unions have not yet reached the limit of their development. Rather I would say that we are just at the beginning of their constructive period. . . . Practically nothing has yet been done to establish effective machinery of joint conference between the representative organisations entitled to speak for industry as a whole . . . and who have responsibility for the conduct of industry and know its problems at first hand. . . . Discussion on these lines would bring both sides face to face with the hard realities of the present economic situation, and might yield useful results in showing how far and on what terms co-operation is possible in a common endeavour to improve the efficiency of industry and to raise the workers' standard of life." While the whole Press welcomed the suggestion of Hicks, the employers' organisations remained indifferent, until Sir Alfred Mond (now Lord Melchett) took the initiative and, in a letter of November 23, 1927, invited the General Council to a conference with the view of discussing questions concerning the entire field of industrial organisation and industrial relations. The General Council accepted the invitation, and on January 12, 1928, the first full joint conference of twenty-seven of the most prominent British employers and the General Council took place. The leader of the employers' group was Sir Alfred Mond, the leader of the General Council was its president for 1927—Ben Turner. There were in the months January—July, 1928, a dozen conferences, presided over alternately by Sir Alfred Mond and Ben Turner. The discussions dealt with the finance and management of industry, new developments in technology and organisation, methods of rationalisation, means for assuring the security of the workers and for setting up a National Industrial Council and conciliation machinery for settling disputes. The employers declared that reconstruction had become a vital necessity, which, however,

needed the co-operation of the workers; changes in the industrial system were inevitable, and in order that they should be brought about in a constitutional, peaceful manner, national arrangements for a constant and friendly exchange of views between Capital and Labour were to be instituted. The trade unions were thus not only recognised as a bargaining factor in collective agreements regarding wages and hours of work, but as national organs in the reconstruction and management of industry. Next to Lord Melchett, Lord Weir, Sir David Milne-Watson, and George Hicks, though the latter does not like all the implications of the new policy, the initial success of the Mond-Turner conferences is due to Walter Citrine, the general secretary of the General Council, and to J. H. Thomas.

Some leaders of Labour regard the new development as an important step in the direction of industrial democracy, of raising the industrial status of Labour to the political level. The Mond-Turner Conferences were approved by the Sixtieth Trades Union Congress in Swansea (September, 1928) by an overwhelming majority. Both the Labour Party and the Trade Union Congress look upon the present as a transition period from capitalism to socialism. The co-operation in industry is the counterpart to the political coalition of the social democratic Labour Parties with the progressive parties in Parliament and Government. Here is one of the most salient differences between them and the Communists. The former regard industrial co-operation with enlightened Capital, and political coalition with progressive parties, as the appropriate and most beneficial policy of Labour in the transition period from capitalism to socialism; while the Communists regard the dictatorship of the proletariat as the proper government during the transition period, in which capitalist society will be transformed into a socialist society. The Communists argue that there can be no co-operation between Capital and Labour for the benefit of the latter; no equality of status of the proprietors and the proletariat is possible, since those who possess the means of life are the masters of those whom they can starve; no matter how strong democratically minded Labour is, it will always get the worst, unless it adopts revolutionary

methods. The Communists, the Left Wing, the Minority movement, the Cook-Maxton opposition,[1] are, however, numerically too weak to deflect labour from its strictly evolutionary course mapped out for it by Sidney Webb in his writings since 1884, and by Ramsay MacDonald in his *Socialism and Society* (1905).

[1] Cook and Maxton, *Our Case*, London, 1928; *Socialist Review*, monthly organ of the I.L.P., edited by J. Strachey, who keeps the reader well informed on these questions.

XXIII

THE YEARS 1929–39

I.—THE DIFFICULTIES OF LABOUR GOVERNMENTS

THE British Labour organisations, both in the form of trade unions and of electoral bodies, exhibit a certain rhythm in their movement for the amelioration of the social conditions of the wage-earners. Whenever their weight as trade unions proves insufficient to achieve their purpose, they concentrate, in constituency and municipality, on their political power as democratic citizens, and *vice versa*. This rhythm has increasingly manifested itself since the second Reform Bill (1867) and the Local Government Act (1888).

The years 1926–28, following the defeat of the national stoppage and the prolonged contest of the miners, formed a period of trade union decline and deterioration of the labour conditions. It was therefore not difficult to foresee that the main efforts of the Labour organisations would soon be directed towards political action, in order to bring their voting power to bear upon Parliament, with a view to abrogation of the Trade Disputes Act (1927) and to obtaining social reform laws, particularly in favour of the miners and the unemployed.

The political propaganda against the Baldwin Government proved very popular in Labour circles and resulted in surprisingly large successes at the General Election of 1929. The votes polled by the Labour candidates rose from 5,487,820 in 1924 to 8,362,594 in 1929, and the number of members of the Parliamentary Labour Party increased from 151 to 289, against 269 Conservatives and 59 Liberals. The Labour Party thus emerged

from the election as the strongest single Party, but could only form a Government with the co-operation of the Liberals. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, the leader of the Labour Party, took over the Premiership.

The real difficulties of Labour and Socialist Governments, as the post-war events amply demonstrated, always and everywhere begin after the victory, no matter whether the victory is the result of a revolution or of constitutional methods. The difficulties arise from two sources: (i) the exaggerated hopes and the urgency of the demands of the working classes for immediate improvements; (ii) the opposition of the propertied classes to any policy of far-reaching economic reform advocated by Socialists. With these difficulties a Labour Government has seriously to reckon and to provide for even in case of having an absolute majority; and the difficulties grow quite formidable if it has to depend for a majority on another Parliamentary party. The MacDonald Government was in the latter position in 1929–31, as it had been in 1924.

The experience of the difficulties in 1924 might have hardened and strengthened the determination of Labour Leaders of the type of Keir Hardie and John Wheatley to move boldly forward and not to be daunted in their effort to implement the electoral programme as far as the immediate needs of Labour are concerned. Those men loved the common people; and their love was the unerring and driving motive of their Socialist activities. The effect of the experience of 1924 on Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden was the opposite: it weakened their faith in social reform as demanded by the labouring masses, and it strengthened their respect for the wide economic knowledge and financial dexterity of the captains of commerce and industry.

The nine months of office of MacDonald and Snowden in 1924, disclosed to them a world, not at all corresponding with that which they, as old propagandists of Socialism, had been wont to theorise upon and to subject to severe criticism. On the assumption of their high offices in 1929—one as Prime Minister, and the other as Chancellor of the Exchequer—they were chastened and

timid men, and their dependence on Liberal co-operation was surely not calculated to fill them with courage.

The Labour Government could thus neither carry the repeal of the Trade Disputes Act nor improve the condition of the miners or effectively amend the Unemployment Insurance Act, for which the trade unions were clamouring. After the first twelve months of the Labour Government, disappointment was growing among the labouring masses, for the percentage of unemployed was rising. In 1929 it amounted to 10·4 of the insured workers; in 1930 it rose to 16·0. At the Nottingham Trades Union Congress (1930) the work of the Labour Government found many severe critics among the delegates, to whom Mr. (later Sir) Ben Turner replied:

" In recent days there have been a number of our own people both in the Trade Union and the political world who have been decrying the present Labour Government for their alleged inefficiency and ineffectiveness, and who have been prophesying that in the next election we are going to be down and out. I want to repudiate all such notions " (*Trades Union Congress Report*, 1930, p. 289).

The events of 1931 proved that the prophets had not prophesied in vain, but none of them could have foreseen the calamitous nature of the fulfilment of the prophecy, for none could then have foreseen the reactions of the American industrial crisis and the financial catastrophe in Austria and Germany on British politics.

2.—THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

The post-war years were in the U.S.A., and partly also in Central and Western Europe, a period of vast economic activities, industrial reconstruction and technical re-equipment, generally known as rationalisation. In the years 1924 to 1929 all those countries enjoyed great prosperity. The effective demand was everywhere large, particularly in the U.S.A., and came not only from exporters but from the home market. Agriculture and manufacture grew prodigiously and, outstripping even the con-

stantly increasing consumption, finally resulted in the U.S.A. in overproduction of commodities and in over-speculation in industrial and financial securities. In the autumn of 1929 came the collapse of prices and profits, with its inevitable restriction of production, rapid increase of unemployment, runs on the deposit banks, and suspension of payments. The collapse of the American economic structure, which had been deemed to be impregnable, shook the whole complicated, yet finely balanced, fabric of international credit.

The distrust communicated itself to the financial centres of Europe, and soon made itself most painfully felt in Central Europe—in Austria and Germany—for, in addition to their financial weakness, the rapid rise of the Nazi Party was paralysing trade and commerce. The Nazis made no secret of their determination to repudiate all War Reparation payments, to destroy the Versailles Treaty, and to outlaw the Jews. Their programme meant war against the beneficiaries of the Versailles Treaty, and revolutionary changes at home. In September 1930, at the General Election in Germany, the Parliamentary representation of the Nazi Party rose from fourteen to over a hundred members, and disorder became the order of the day. German public life appeared to lose all stability.

The effect of the Nazi successes at the September election (1930) proved disastrous. Foreign creditors, mainly American, French and Dutch, who had advanced short-term loans to Germany, urgently called for speedy settlement; home depositors of local banks withdrew as much as they could obtain, so that even the largest banking establishments were being gradually depleted of their liquid resources. In July, 1931, one of the leading Berlin banks—the Darmstädter Bank—closed its doors, after having been compelled to repay to foreign creditors some 500 million marks within four or five months.

At this point we must return to British affairs, for in no other financial centre was the reaction of the German calamity so severely felt as in London, and this from two reasons. First, a large part of London's sterling resources was immobilised in long-term loans in Germany. Second, the general loss of con-

fidence, caused by the American crisis, the German disintegration, and the fear that London was to a large extent involved in the German financial calamities, induced foreign creditors, who had considerable gold balances in London banks, to call them in. The Bank of England honoured its obligations and was losing much of its gold, until in the summer of 1931 the drain became unbearable, so that the Governors had to appeal to New York and Paris for gold advances. This signal of distress added to the general nervousness and filled some people with fear for the stability of the pound sterling and with forebodings of British insolvency.

3.—THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT IN CRISIS

The effects of the American industrial crisis, the Austrian and German financial calamities and political unrest, and the rationalisation of British industry in post-war years, combined to make unemployment, for the time being, the most crucial of all problems for the British working classes. Towards the end of 1930 the number of unemployed increased to over 2,300,000, and in 1931 unemployment of the insured workpeople amounted to 21 per cent, and in some important industries to 25 per cent. The expenditure on unemployment insurance benefit rose proportionately and gave the opponents of Labour the opportunity for discrediting the Labour Government.

In December 1930 the Government appointed a Royal Commission on Unemployment, before whom a Treasury officer, Sir Richard Hopkins, declared that unemployment benefit was being paid with borrowed money. This and similar evidence, as well as the gold outflow and the fear for the stability of the pound sterling, led to launching an economy movement with a view to calling a halt to public expenditure and to saving the country from bankruptcy. The financial difficulties, though caused mainly by the external causes mentioned above, were laid at the door of the Labour Government.

The economy movement seems to have greatly impressed the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for on

February 11, 1931; the latter told the House of Commons that, without drastic and disagreeable sacrifices from all, it would be impossible to balance the Budget. An Economy Committee on National Expenditure was set up under the chairmanship of Sir George May, whose Report—the so-called May Report—was issued at the end of July, 1931, and gave its opinion that the Budget for 1932 would show a deficit of £120 millions, which would have to be met by economies (about £90 millions) and fresh taxation (about £30 millions).

"The wide publicity given to this Report greatly intensified the fears existing on the Continent and elsewhere. The British Press took up the cry and alleged that the economic position was alarming. . . . The result was to increase still further the withdrawal of gold from London" (*Trades Union Congress Report*, 1931, p. 512–513).

The fears were, in fact, greatly exaggerated. The alleged deficit included the provision of £50 millions for the Sinking Fund, and a loan of £40 millions for the Unemployed Insurance Fund. Now, the Sinking Fund could have been suspended, and the loan for the Insurance Fund would be repaid as soon as employment improved, so that there remained only a deficit of £30 millions—a sum which Britain had been spending in four or five days during the Great War (1914–1918).

Nevertheless the impression made on MacDonald and Snowden was decisive, and they spoke of the "dread realities" which Labour refused to face. They demanded sacrifices, to which neither the Party nor the trades unions could agree. The latter made counter-proposals—suspension of the Sinking Fund and increased taxation—which the majority of the Cabinet rejected. So the things stood on August 21, 1931, and no other consultation took place and no further communication passed between the Cabinet and the Executives of the Party and the Trade Unions. "We heard nothing more," relates Mr. (Now Sir) Walter Citrine, "until, on Monday, August 24th, we heard that a National Government was being formed" (*Trades Union Congress Report*, 1931, p. 83).

MacDonald, Snowden, and Thomas deserted their Party,

joined the leaders of the Conservatives and some Liberals, and formed on that day the "National" Government with a view to restoring the national credit by carrying into effect the economies recommended in the May Report, namely, cuts in salaries, wages, and unemployment benefit.

4.—DEFECTION AND DEFEAT

The Party and the trade unionists bore with quiet dignity the insult offered to them by their most prominent political leaders. The defection of trusted officers caused some painful disappointment, but no disarray among the rank and file.

Ramsay MacDonald, who had grown in political stature with the growth of the Labour Party, forfeited the love which many good men and women had cherished for him, and he failed to win the respect of the Conservatives. He was allowed to continue in office as Prime Minister for a few years, but he evidently felt a beaten man; there was neither zest nor happiness in his heart any more.

Philip Snowden, who was rewarded with a Viscountcy, enjoyed much popularity in the North of England, but neither he nor the Party was any the worse for his defection. It was, somehow, hard to think of him as a comrade with whom one could talk intimately on Socialist and trade union matters, and still less on international Labour politics, and on all those questions which formed controversial topics on Socialist Congresses or Conferences. He was essentially a free-trade English Radical, with friendly feelings towards the labouring people as long as they agreed with him.

Among the more prominent leaders who remained true to the Party and to his Trade Union comrades was Arthur Henderson, Foreign Secretary in 1929–1931, and formerly Party Secretary. He was henceforth sure to be received with hearty and demonstrative cheering whenever he put in an appearance on Labour Conferences. He was one of the finest products of British trade unionism and Gladstonian tradition; genial and loyal as a co-worker, a model chairman, tactful, sympathetic, and never at

a loss for a shrewd reply to an opponent; a man of peace and reform, and disposed to settle differences by friendly discussion. One could not have wished for a better man at the head of a Labour Government.

The National Government, in the two months from the end of August to the end of October 1931, initiated its policy of economies, which caused much unrest amongst the wage- and salary-earning classes. At the same time the Government took the pound sterling off gold and reduced its nominal value by about 33 per cent. The pound sterling sank to the nominal value of a medieval English silver mark. The " dreadful prospect " of the fall of the pound to the level of the German inflation mark in 1923, with which MacDonald and Snowden had tried to frighten the trade unions into accepting the cuts of wages and salaries, failed to materialise. The National Government was particularly lucky. The exceptionally low level of American commodity prices in 1931, which was partly the effect of the general economic crisis and partly the cause of its long duration, prevented the British prices rising in proportion to the devaluation of the pound sterling, and thus warded off the lowering of the standard of life of the fully-employed working-people, which would have inevitably followed the cuts of wages. The real trouble was that the number of unemployed, those, that is, who depended on unemployment benefit, was so abnormally large and that the policy of economies hit the poorest so hard.

In the midst of the complications of everyday life and the perplexities of the currency problem it was by no means so easy to grasp the causative sequence of events as we do it now *post factum* on paper. The policy of economies as regards wages, salaries, and unemployed benefit, and particularly the fall of the pound, the abandonment of gold, and the borrowing of gold in Paris and New York, caused much perturbation and gave rise to deep misgivings about the position of the country. Some even feared or expected that the final collapse of the capitalist system was rapidly approaching. A good many people ascribed all their private worries and troubles to the Labour Government, to the alleged unfitness of Labour to govern. Into this unrest

and disquiet came the dissolution of Parliament, and the General Election took place at the end of October 1931.

The electoral method of Britain takes on, in times of public excitement and tension, the irrationality of a lottery. The Labour Party which in 1929 polled 8,360,000 votes and elected 287 members, obtained now in round figures 6,500,000 votes but got only 52 members elected. The loss of votes had nothing of a sensational character, but the loss of 235 members was a staggering blow and looked like an overwhelming and irreparable defeat, like a knock-out. The triumph of the National Government was indeed complete. No effective opposition seemed possible. Britain turned into a quasi-totalitarian state.

5.—REVIVAL AND STATEMENT OF POLICY

The first reactions to the severe lessons of 1931 were unfavourable to a continuation of the policy of "gradualism." The advocates of a more decisively Socialist attitude had for a time the upper hand. At the Party Conference at Leicester, in October 1932, a resolution, moved by Sir Charles Trevelyan, was carried, which instructed the Parliamentary Labour Party and the next Labour Government to promulgate definite Socialist legislation, and to stand or fall on the principles in which they had faith. Of equal determination was the Socialist spirit which animated the proceedings of the Trades Union Congress at Newcastle, in September, 1932. The opening address of the chairman, John Bromley, was a rousing plea for the inauguration of a Socialist policy as the only remedy against the evils of an economic system that proved unable to adjust consumption to overflowing production, or which allowed poverty and under-nourishment to exist in the midst of plenty.

The revolutionary wave, however, was of comparatively short duration. The organised working classes—with the exception of the small minorities which formed the Independent Labour Party (I.L.P.), the Communist Party, the Socialist League, etc. —returned to their faith in gradual reform, and steadfastly refused to allow any scope to the Communist Party or any Left

Movement to influence their policy. Of the smaller bodies which advocated a more determined Socialist policy, the Communists were undoubtedly the more important, and yet, for all their ability, zeal, and self-sacrifice, they failed to make any impression on Labour. The critical years 1930–1932 were, indeed, putting the Communists to the crucial test, and they were found wanting. At the General Election in 1931, their twenty-six candidates polled the grand total of 74,824 votes, an average of less than 3,000 votes for each candidate. From these facts we draw the lesson: If a Communist Party, after ten years of ardent propaganda, is unable to make headway at a time when " gradualism " is visibly falling into discredit, when the feeling is widespread among organised Labour that capitalism is on the decline, and when unemployment is putting 20 to 25 per cent of the insured workpeople on the " dole," then the conclusion is inescapable and the argument irrefutable that there is no hope for a Communist Party in Britain.

A similar consideration applies to the I.L.P. which in the autumn of 1932 severed its connection with the Labour Party. Socialists, who for one reason or another separate themselves, or are kept separated, from the organised Labour Movement, are doomed to become sectarians, that is, self-constituted guardians of the purity of doctrine, without influence on the main currents of social life. This was for many years a weakness also of the Social Democratic Federation, which, as I learn while writing these lines, closed its existence at the end of October 1939, after two generations of Socialist propaganda. Founded in the years 1881–1883 by H. M. Hyndman and his friends, it lived to see the rise of the Fabian Society, the New Unionism, the I.L.P., the Labour Party, and the adoption of Socialist principles by organised British Labour.

Ever since the end of 1932 a gradual revival of the Labour forces has manifested itself. Their participation in Municipal elections and Parliamentary by-elections brought them considerable successes, and boded well for the General Election of 1935. The hopes of Labour were not deceived. It regained its voting strength of 1929 in polling 8,330,000 votes, though

not its Parliamentary strength, the number of elected members amounting to only 154 *plus* 4 I.L.P. members.

From 1935 onwards the same tendency has been operating in Municipal Elections and Parliamentary By-elections. In the London County Council the Socialists came to power in 1934, and, led by Herbert Morrison, have earned the confidence and respect of all classes of the metropolis.

The policy of the Labour Party or Socialist Party—the latter appellation is coming more and more into use—can now be clearly stated. From the experience of the first and second Labour Governments the Party drew the following lessons: (i) Not to ally itself to any other organisation, no matter whether it calls itself " United Front," " Popular Front," " Left Unity Campaign "; (ii) To refuse any invitation to join or to form a Coalition Government, but to remain strictly a Labour Party, based on a Socialist programme of a gradual reconstruction of society through democratic methods; (iii) To concentrate all its efforts on gaining a solid majority at the next General Election.

As to its policy during the war, which began in September 1939, the Parliamentary Labour Party is to act as a responsible and constructively-minded Opposition, criticising or supporting the Government measures on their merits, while preserving complete independence and preparing for the day when it will itself be called upon to form a Government.

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